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YE
OLDE FIRE LADDIES

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HERBERT ASBURY



UP FROM METHODISM (1926)



THE DEVIL OF PEI-LING (1927)



A METHODIST SAINT:
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THE GANGS OF NEW YORK (1928)



CARRY NATION (1929)



EDITED BY
HERBERT ASBURY



THE BON VIVANT'S COMPANION

or

HOW TO MIX DRINKS

by

PROFESSOR JERRY THOMAS



New York's First Fire Engines

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

BY

HERBERT ASBURY



NEW YORK & LONDON: ALFRED · A · KNOPF

MCM



XXX

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To

HELEN HAHN ASBURY

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YE
OLDE FIRE LADDIES

THE WORSHIPFUL
FIRE WARDENS

I

THE FIRST recorded fire within the limits of the present City of New York occurred on a clear November night in 1613, when the trading ship *Tiger*, commanded by Captain Adriaen Block and owned by the Dutch merchants Hans Honger, Paulus Pelgrom and Lambrecht Van Tweenhuysen, burned at her anchorage off the rocky point now known as the Battery. Driven into their small boats by the conflagration, Captain Block and his companions put ashore, forcing a precarious passage among the huge ice cakes which swirled at the conjunction of the East and Hudson Rivers.¹ After suffering great hardships, for the winter was bitter cold, the castaways erected four small huts about where the building at No. 39 Broadway now stands — the first habitations constructed by white men on Manhattan Island. They were little more than rude shelters, without flooring or conveniences of any sort, and were made in the Indian fashion by bending over and joining the tops of two parallel rows of saplings. The roofs were thatched with reeds and boughs, and the walls lined with bark.

On food provided by the friendly and hospitable Manhattan Indians, a weak branch of the Mohican nation, the crew of the *Tiger* lived in comparative comfort until the early spring of 1614, when Captain Block utilized the remaining timbers of his ship and, with the aid of the savages,

built a sixteen-ton yacht which he called the *Restless*. In this small vessel he ventured through the narrow and dangerous strait called Hell Gate ² and explored Long Island Sound, following the southern shore line of Connecticut and sailing up the Great Fresh River ³ as far as the modern city of Hartford. Then he steered his frail craft past the island which now bears his name and northward on the Atlantic to Cape Cod, where he unexpectedly met the *Fortune*, commanded by Captain Hendrick Christiaensen. They exchanged ships after some discussion, and New York City's first settler and shipbuilder set his course for Holland, while Captain Christiaensen continued his explorations along the Massachusetts coast in the *Restless*.

Soon after his arrival at Amsterdam Captain Block's employers sent him into the Arctic regions on a whaling voyage. He never again visited America. Captain Christiaensen, however, returned during the summer of 1615 with a commission from the United Netherland Company, which had been granted the exclusive right to trade in New Netherland for four successive voyages. With two or three vessels, one of which bore the first cargo of domestic live stock ever to set foot on New York soil — goats, sheep, rabbits and other small animals, all of which soon died from eating poisonous vegetation — Captain Christiaensen sailed up the Hudson to Castle Island, a little below the present site of Albany, and there established a trading post which he called Fort Nassau. It consisted of a log house twenty-six feet wide and thirty-six feet long, surrounded by a stockade fifty feet square, on which were mounted two cannons and eleven stone guns on swivels. A moat eighteen feet wide encircled the stockade. The work on the post had scarcely been completed, and Jacob Eelkens placed in command, when Captain Christiaensen was murdered by a young Indian chief whom he had previously taken on a voyage to Holland.

In the spring of 1616 a few of the Dutch traders

dropped down the river from Fort Nassau and established the first real settlement on Manhattan — a small log house at the southern end of the island, which answered the purposes of fort and warehouse. Nearby was dug a pit some thirty feet square and seven feet deep. It was floored with planks and roofed with sod, bark and sail-cloth, and in it lived the half-dozen men who handled the business of the post. A brisk trade in furs and other native products soon sprang up. The United Netherland Company held the trading monopoly until 1618, when its charter expired, and for five years thereafter the Dutch government issued only special licenses from year to year. But in 1623 the Dutch West India Company was granted exclusive rights, and immediately began active operations, trading principally in furs and cultivating none of the land excepting a few garden patches. A year later, however, the Company sent over thirty families of Protestant Walloons, and about a score of single men, in several ships under the command of Captain Cornelius May, who was appointed the first Director-General of the colony. Two of the families and six men were sent to make a settlement upon the Great Fresh River, and eight of the men remained on Manhattan. The remainder of the settlers went up the Hudson to the mouth of the Twasentha River, where a new fort had been erected on a hill in 1617, after old Fort Nassau had been almost washed away by a spring freshet that followed the breaking up of the river ice. They immediately began the construction of a new post in the area now occupied by the business district of Albany, which was named Fort Orange.

Impressed by the reports of Captain May, who commented very favorably upon the fertility of the soil and the salubrity of the climate, the West India Company began, late in 1624, to consider the advisability of building a town upon the lower part of Manhattan Island. Inducements were offered to all who might wish to emigrate to America, and

early in 1625 four ships sailed from Amsterdam, bearing forty-five persons, including six entire families, together with their household goods and farming implements. Two of the vessels, commanded by Peter Evertsen Hulft, carried one hundred and three head of horses and cattle, as well as a large number of swine and sheep. The animals were landed on Governor's Island,⁴ but no grazing ground could be found for them there, so they were loaded onto barges and shallops and taken to Manhattan, where they thrived. They were the first large domestic animals to be brought to New York, and the first of any size to be bred successfully.

The topography of Manhattan Island when these early settlers disembarked from their ships offered the greatest possible contrast to that with which dwellers in the modern metropolis are familiar. Along the East River the coast was alternately rocky and sandy, with many inlets leading to the swamps and marshes which dotted the lower half of the island. The shore of the Hudson was low, and broken by innumerable small bays and estuaries. Several rocky hills rose to heights of one hundred to one hundred and forty feet above sea level, particularly in the region now known as Washington Heights. Midway of the island was a large fresh-water pond fed by springs, which drained into the Hudson by a swift stream that followed the present line of Canal Street, and into the East River by a brook which flowed in a southeasterly direction through a marsh that covered, roughly, the area now bounded by Pearl and Catherine Streets and Park Row.⁵

Almost the whole of the island was covered by a dense forest, with occasional clearings in which were the villages and cultivated fields of the Indians. The savages raised principally corn, beans and tobacco, with a few pumpkins, squashes and watermelons. Some of their cookery was extremely palatable. They taught the Dutch how to roast

corn upon the cob, and how to cook beans and corn together, producing a still very popular dish which the Indians called *succotash*. Fish were abundant, both in the fresh water streams and in the waters surrounding the island. Some were of enormous size. Sturgeon ten feet long are said to have been caught, although they were not liked by the Dutch and were seldom eaten. According to the Dutch historian Van der Donck,⁶ lobsters from five to six feet in length were often captured, but the smaller ones were more esteemed for the table. When Hudson and Block entered New York harbor both the lower and the upper bay fairly teemed with whales, porpoises and sharks, all of which vanished with the growth of commerce. For many years, however, whales were often stranded upon the Manhattan shore, and frequently wandered many miles up the Hudson, terrifying the crews of the small sailing boats which plied between Albany and the sea with cargoes of furs and other commodities. "In the month of March, 1647," wrote Van der Donck, "two whales, of common size, swam up the river forty miles,⁷ from which place one of them returned and stranded about twelve miles from the sea, near which place four others stranded the same year. The other ran up the river and stranded near the great Cahoos Falls,⁸ about forty-three miles from the sea. This fish was tolerably fat, for although the citizens of Rennselaerwyck boiled out a great quantity of train oil, still the whole river (the current being very rapid) was oily for three weeks, and covered with grease."

The settlers who came to the New World with Captain Cornelius May and Peter Evertsen Hulft built a few rude huts and began to till the soil, but the existence of New York as an organized community really began with the arrival of Peter Minuet, who succeeded Captain May as Director-General, or Governor, of the colony. Minuet sailed from Amsterdam late in December, 1625, in the ship *Sea Mew*,

and landed on Manhattan on May 4, 1626. Two days later he held a great conclave with the Indian chiefs near the present site of the Aquarium, at the Battery, and there consummated one of the most important real estate deals in American history — he bought Manhattan Island from the savages for buttons, beads and other trinkets worth about twenty-four dollars, and so founded the village of New Amsterdam. A very industrious and energetic man, Peter Minuet immediately set about building a town and organizing the government of the province. He retained the supreme executive, judicial and legislative power by authority of the West India Company, but he was assisted by an Advisory Council of five, to which he appointed Peter Byvelt, Jacob Ellertsen Wissinck, Jan Jansen Brouwer, Simon Dircksen Pos, and Reynert Harmennsen. Isaac De Rasiers was named Secretary of the Council, and the laws and proclamations were published and enforced by Jan Lampo, the Schout-Fiscal, an official who combined the duties of Sheriff, Attorney-General, and Customs Officer.

Governor Minuet had brought with him a noted Dutch engineer, Kryn Fredericksen, who immediately began the erection of a fort on the sloping terrain south of the Bowling Green and north of a great ledge of rock called the Capske. Below the Capske, which ended about where State Street now runs, all of Manhattan Island was under water at high tide. Fredericksen projected an intricate series of fortifications, but both material and labor were scarce, and he could construct only a large blockhouse encircled by palisades of red cedar and a mound of sodded earthworks. It was called Fort Amsterdam. Within a few yards of the fort, Fredericksen built a stone building, thatched with reeds, which housed the West India Company's store and warerooms. The first murder recorded in the annals of New York City occurred while the fort was under construction, when three of the Governor's servants robbed and killed a friendly Weck-

THE WORSHIPFUL FIRE WARDENS

quaeskeeck Indian who, accompanied by his young nephew, had come to the village to trade. The nephew escaped, vowing vengeance, and some fifteen years later returned to Manhattan and murdered a wheelwright, Claes Smits, who lived on the shore of Deutal Bay.⁹ The chief of the Indian's tribe refused to surrender him, pointing out that he had but avenged his uncle.

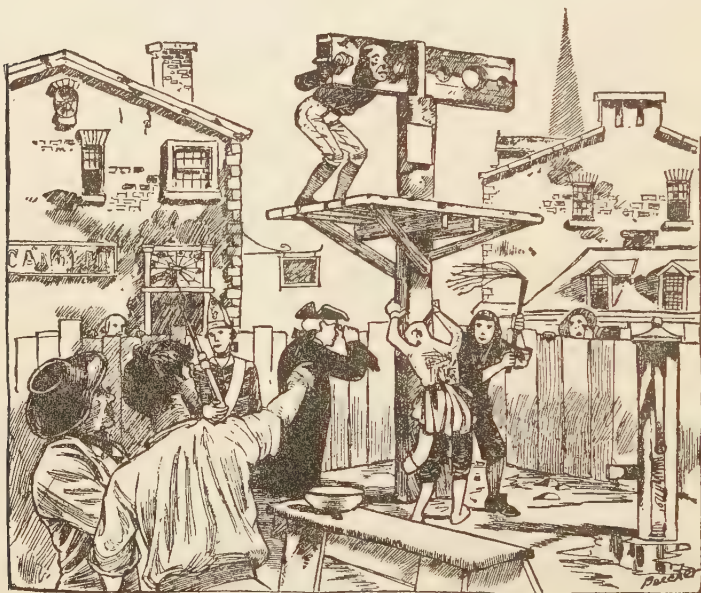
In front of the fort the Dutch set up their various instruments of punishment and correction — the ducking



The Ducking Stool

stool, the pillory, the cage, the stocks, and the whipping post, from which an evil doer, having been lashed, was hoisted by his waistband into the air, there to dangle until he had repented of his misdeeds. The celebrated wooden horse was first used in December, 1638, when two soldiers were

sentenced to bestride its razor-like back for two hours, with weights and chains hung on their feet.¹⁰ Some of the punishments prescribed by the early Dutch sound very quaint to our modern ears. A farmer named Hendrick Jansen, having been convicted of slandering the Governor, was compelled to stand at the gates of the Fort and loudly beg that official's pardon. Guyshert Van Regerslard, a sailor on the yacht *Hope*, drew his knife on a comrade, and was sentenced to re-



Pillory and Whipping Post

ceive three stripes from each member of the crew, and then to throw himself from the yard-arm of the ship three times. The first attempt at capital punishment was made in 1641, a year before the erection of the Stadt Huys, or City Hall. Nine Negroes were placed on trial for the murder of one of their fellows, and all pleaded guilty, thereby placing the Councillors in a dilemma, for to hang so many servants of

the Company would have been wasteful and expensive. It was finally decided that the Negroes should draw lots to determine which should be "punished by the cord until death." The choice fell upon Manuel Gerrit, popularly known as the Giant, who is said to have been the biggest man on Manhattan Island. Two halters were strapped about his neck, but they snapped under his weight. The hangmen tried again with three, and when they also broke the citizens began to clamor for a pardon, which the Governor hastily granted. It was agreed that divine intercession had saved the Negro's life.

With an established government, a fort, a store, twenty or thirty houses, and efficient machinery for punishing criminals and enforcing the laws, New Amsterdam soon began to assume the outward appearance of a real town. And also the village began very early to acquire the cosmopolitanism which remains one of New York's most pronounced characteristics; for, while the early colonists were all Dutch, adventurers and traders from all parts of the civilized world quickly flocked to the new settlement. "On this island of Manhattan, and in its environs," wrote the Rev. Isaac Jogues,¹¹ discoverer of Lake George, "there may well be four or five hundred men of different sects and nations; the Director-General told me [in 1643] that there were persons of eighteen different languages. They are settled here and there along the river, above and below, as the beauty and conveniences of the spot invited them to settle; some mechanics, however, who ply their trade, are ranged under the fort; all the others are exposed to the incursions of the natives, who, in the year 1643, when I was there, actually killed some two-score Hollanders, and burnt many houses and barns full of wheat." And in 1692 a citizen wrote to a relative in England that "our chiefest unhappiness here is too great a mixture of nations."

THE timber used in the construction of the first dwelling houses built by the Dutch in New York was cut in the forest on Governor's Island, and floated to Manhattan. As a rule the buildings were one story in height, with a garret, and two rooms on the ground floor. The roof was thatched with straw or reeds, or sometimes with closely interlaced boughs and pieces of bark. In the center a stone fireplace rose to a height of some ten feet, with an oven alongside. Above the stone-work the chimney was of wood, plastered inside with mortar, or of platted reeds, likewise mortared. During the first few years the colonists built wherever they pleased; consequently many of the houses encroached upon the lines of the streets, a fact which accounts for many of the crooked and haphazard thoroughfares in lower New York. No attempt was made to direct the growth of the city in an orderly manner until the arrival of Pieter Stuyvesant, who became Director-General in 1647. One of his first official acts was to reorganize the municipal government, appointing Burgomasters and Schepens, or Aldermen, who promptly enacted New York's first building code and appointed three of the leading citizens — Cornelius Van Tienhoven, Paulus Leendersen Vandiegrist and Lubert Van Duicklaren, the Equipage-Master — as Surveyors of Buildings. These officials were "authorized and empowered to condemn all improprieties and disorder in buildings, fences, palisades, posts, and rails." All persons intending to settle within or near the village of New Amsterdam were notified that "nothing shall be done or undertaken without the knowledge, consent and examination of the aforesaid Surveyors of Buildings, in the penalty of twenty-five carolus guilders, and also of having whatever they may have put up removed." The Burgomasters and Schepens also passed ordinances abolishing wooden or plat-

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ted chimneys and forbidding their erection, but these laws were not rigidly enforced, and such materials continued to be used for another ten or fifteen years.

All of these structures were extremely inflammable, for the heat from the fireplace soon flaked off the mortar, exposing the wood and reeds to the flames. From the earliest days fires were of frequent occurrence, and the settlers lived in constant terror lest a great conflagration drive them into the sea. Methods of fighting the flames were necessarily primitive. There was plenty of water — most of the dwellings were near the rivers, a “stream deep enough for market boats” flowed along the present line of Broad Street as far as Exchange Place, and several wells had been dug — but there was a shortage of buckets, pails, tubs, and other receptacles, and no organized system of getting the water upon a fire. With that typical delay which time has scarcely lessened, the municipal authorities did nothing whatsoever toward protection against fire until early in 1648, almost a year after the energetic Stuyvesant had become ruler of the colony. Two houses having burned during the latter part of 1647, Stuyvesant published a proclamation on January 23, 1648, informing the citizens that “the prompt and excellent Director-General and their Honors the Councillors have deemed it advisable and highly necessary to look into the matter.” The Council thereupon passed the first fire law ever enacted in New York City, directing the people to clean their chimneys of soot, and again forbidding the erection of wooden or platted chimneys. Besides these provisions, the ordinance authorized the appointment of four Worshipful Fire Wardens, and empowered these officials to inspect every hearth and chimney in the city, from the Fort to the Fresh Water Pond. If any should be condemned as foul, the owner thereof, “without any gainsaying,” was to pay immediately a fine of three guilders. It was further ordered that “in case the house of any person

shall be burned or be on fire, either through his own negligence or of his own fire, he shall be mulcted in the penalty of twenty-five guilders." Money collected as fines was to be applied to the maintenance of fire ladders, hooks and buckets, "which shall be provided and procured at the first opportunity."

As Worshipful Fire Wardens, who may properly be said to have formed the first New York Fire Department, the Director-General appointed Adriaen Keyser, Martin Crigier, Thomas Hall and George Woolsey, all very influential burghers. Keyser was an official of the Dutch West India Company, and Commissary of the Executive Council of New Amsterdam. Crigier kept a famous tavern on the site now occupied by the building at No. 3 Broadway, opposite the Bowling Green and adjoining the equally celebrated place kept by Sergeant Peter Cock.¹² After the city had been incorporated, Crigier became a member of the Executive Council, and was one of the first two Burgomasters. Hall and Woolsey were Englishmen. The former was captured by the Dutch and paroled, and remained in the colony as superintendent of Jacob Van Corlear's estate on Long Island. In time he became very wealthy, owning a large farm in the vicinity of Beekman and Spruce Streets, which later became the property of William Beekman and helped to found the Beekman fortune. Woolsey came out to New Amsterdam as the agent of Isaac Allerton, an English trader who arrived in America on the Mayflower, and soon thereafter removed to Manhattan Island.

How long the Worshipful Fire Wardens held office is unknown, but they appear to have been remiss, for the practice of inspecting hearths and chimneys soon fell into disuse, and the embryo metropolis was again the prey of the fire demon. On February 26, 1656, soon after the city had been incorporated, surveyed, mapped and confirmed by law to

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“remain, from this time forward, without alteration,”¹³ the new Burgomasters proclaimed that “within this city there is but little attention paid to the subject of fire, and to the necessity of keeping the chimneys clean, in consequence of which there have already occurred several fires, and further dangers are to be apprehended for the reason that the greater part of the houses in this town are built of wood, and among them some are covered with reeds and have wooden or platted chimneys.” Following this chiding pronouncement, the Burgomasters, with the assent of the Director-General, appointed Hendrick Hendricksen Kip, Govert Lookermans and Christian Barents as Worshipful Fire Wardens, and authorized them to “visit all the houses and chimneys within the city jurisdiction.” A few months later they added to this force Daniel Litschoe, who kept a tavern in Pearl Street, near Wall. These were all men of large property holdings, and all had suffered severely from fires. They discharged their duties with great diligence, and perhaps a bit officiously, for they soon incurred the enmity of the good dames, who jeeringly called them “chimney sweeps” and poked fun at them. The Worshipful Fire Wardens resented these indignities, and finally, in 1658 the arrest of Dame Madeleen Dirckes was ordered because she had, as the complaint set forth, “presumed to insult the Worshipful Fire Wardens of this city on the public highway, and to make a public riot.” The old court records continue:

Defendant Madeleen Dirckes appears alone in court and admits that she and her sister passed the house of the Fire Warden Litschoe, and as they always joked when the Fire Warden came to their house, she said, “There is the chimney sweep, his chimney is well swept.” The judgment of the court is that, as such things cannot or ought not to be tolerated, on account of its bad consequences, the

defendant is condemned in a fine of two pounds Flemish, to be applied one-half to the church and one-half to the poor.

Director-General Stuyvesant and the Executive Council valiantly supported the Worshipful Fire Wardens in their efforts to check the fires which threatened the very existence of the village. Soon after the issuance of the Burgomasters' proclamation, the Director-General caused several new wells to be dug and ordered the removal of hog-pens and similarly offensive and inflammable structures from Broadway and other principal thoroughfares. He also issued a series of proclamations in which he dwelt upon "the beauties of a well-regulated city, with good dwelling houses and spacious gardens," and urged the citizens to erect more substantial buildings, with brick or stone hearths and chimneys. His pleas bore fruit as the burghers began to amass fortunes by trading with the Indians, and in 1656 several prosperous merchants built stone houses in which to store their goods. A year later Pieter Cornelison and Samuel Baxter constructed stone dwellings in Pearl Street, and in 1658 Stuyvesant built for himself a great mansion near the present Whitehall Street.¹⁴ By 1659 the use of bricks had become so general that a brick-yard was established by the merchants DeGraff and Hogeboom. In those early days the cost of a house and lot in the best part of the city seldom exceeded eight hundred dollars, although occasionally a rich man spent a round thousand upon his home. Rents ranged from twenty-five dollars to one hundred dollars a year, but the latter sum was sufficient for a large estate, with gardens and cultivated fields.

Despite the zeal of the Worshipful Fire Wardens and the proclamations of the Director-General and the Burgomasters, fires continued to occur, and there was a great deal of solemn discussion about the advisability of obtaining real fire-fighting apparatus. The citizens had found that

their puny efforts with gourds, tubs, and the few pails they possessed were of scant avail against the devouring flames. But action was delayed until the late winter of 1657, when the house of Samuel Baxter caught fire from a blazing log that rolled out of the fireplace, and was destroyed. After due deliberation, and considerable prodding by the influential Mr. Baxter, the Director-General and the Executive Council passed the following resolution:

Whereas, in all well-regulated cities it is customary that fire buckets, ladders and hooks are in readiness at the corners of the streets and in public houses, for time of need; which is the more necessary in this city on account of the small number of stone houses and the many wooden houses here:

Therefore, the Director-General and Councillors do authorize the Burgomasters and Schepens of this city, either personally or through their treasurer, to demand immediately for every house, whether small or great, one beaver or eight guilders in sewant; ¹⁵ and to procure from fatherland, out of the sum collected in this manner, two hundred and fifty leathern fire buckets, and also to have made some fire ladders and fire hooks; and to maintain this establishment, they may yearly demand for every chimney one guilder.

The tax was promptly collected by the Burgomasters and Schepens, who appear to have been as efficient in such matters as their modern prototypes. But obtaining the appliances was not such an easy task, even though ample funds were available. The city's craftsmen declined to make the hooks and ladders, and because of the difficulties of shipment the Executive Council was compelled to abandon the idea of importing the buckets from Holland. On August 1, 1658, more than six months after the imposition of the tax, New York's seven shoemakers were called before the

Council and urged to lend their skill to the manufacture of the buckets. But some said that the undertaking was entirely too arduous, while others had no materials. At length,



A Schepen Collecting a Tax

however, the patriotic Remout Remountzen agreed to make one hundred buckets, each to hold about three gallons; and inspired by this example, Adriaen Van Lair offered to fashion fifty if given plenty of time. The Councillors prom-

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ised to pay for each bucket six guilders and two stuyvers (about two dollars and a half in modern currency), payment to be made half in sewant and half in beaver skins.

The shoemakers labored prodigiously, and the buckets, which were the first fire fighting apparatus owned by the city of New York, were delivered to the Council on Janu-



Dutch Cottage in Beaver Street, 1679

ary 20, 1659.¹⁶ Encouraged by the success of Remountzen and Van Lair, other shoemakers began to lay in stocks of tanned leather and to manufacture fire buckets, for which they found a ready market. Within a few years after the purchase of the original lot, every householder in New Amsterdam possessed one or more; and when the British came into permanent possession of the city by the treaty of 1674, many new laws were passed making ownership of fire buckets compulsory and regulating their use and distribution. In March, 1683, a statute was enacted which established the office of "Viewer and Searcher of Hearths

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

and Chimneys," and imposed fines of twenty shillings for defective chimneys, and fifteen shillings upon "every person who shall suffer his house to be on fire." This law, with varying changes, remained in force as late as 1864, when a fine of five dollars was the penalty if "any chimney, stove-pipe or flue within this city shall take fire." To assist the citizens in protecting their homes, the first official chimney sweep, who is said to have originated the startling whoop peculiar to his vocation, was appointed in 1685, and his rates were fixed by law at one shilling and eighteen pence a chimney. In later years this office was filled by Negro boys, who raced through the streets each day at dawn, crying:

Sweep ho!
Sweep ho!
From the bottom to the top
Without a ladder or a rope!
Sweep ho!

In 1686 the city fathers ordered every person having two chimneys to his house to provide one fire bucket, that every house having more than two chimneys include two buckets among its furnishings, that each brewer possess six buckets, and each baker six buckets, "under penalty of six shillings for every bucket wanting." The Mayor was empowered to acquit "poore people" of the penalty, and it was stipulated that the buckets were to be furnished by the occupants of a house, the cost to be deducted from the rent, and "every man to marke the bucketts with the letters of his landlord's name." A year later, in 1687, the Common Council bought additional hooks and ladders, and appointed three Fire Masters whose duties were somewhat similar to the later Chiefs of the Fire Department. The scope of the viewer and searcher law was enlarged in 1697, and "two sufficient persons in every ward" were appointed as "viewers and searchers of chimneys and hearths, to view the same once a week." Persons who refused to clean or re-

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pair defective chimneys were fined three shillings each, of which half went to the complaining viewer; and an additional fine of forty shillings was imposed upon anyone whose chimney caught fire after he had been notified to repair it.

One of the early colonial fire laws directed each citizen to fill three buckets with water at sunset and place them on his doorstep for use in time of need. Another required ten buckets to be filled with water at the town pump "wen ye sun does go down," so that they would be quickly available "if ye fire does go further yan ye efforts of ye men and call for water." When a fire was discovered at night the alarm was spread by the ringing of the bells in the fort and in the steeples of the churches, and the Watchmen ran helter-skelter about the city, banging upon doors and crying, "Throw out your buckets!" As soon as the occupants of a house had been aroused their first act was to open a window and hurl buckets and pails into the street, if they possessed any besides the three which had already been filled and left on the stoop. The Watchmen filled their arms with buckets and hastened to the fire, while others were carried by the citizens who came running from all directions, every man shouting at the top of his voice. As soon as possible two lines of men and women—for the women also answered fire alarms in those days—were formed under the supervision of the Fire Wardens, or Fire Masters. One line passed full buckets from the nearest well or pump, while the other handed the empty receptacle down to be filled. Because of the great excitement most of the buckets were half-empty when they reached the flames, and the firemen and firewomen received most of the water upon their clothing. The Watchmen hovered about to keep any person from breaking through the bucket lines, and when anyone did he was immediately doused with water and hauled off to jail.

When the fire had been extinguished, or the house destroyed, which more often happened, the buckets were

collected by the Watchmen and taken to the City Hall, where they were thrown into a great heap in front of the building. A bellman then went about the city proclaiming that the buckets were ready for delivery to their owners, and at the appointed time the Town Crier mounted a barrel and shouted lustily:

*Hear ye! O, I pray ye!
Lord Masters, claim your buckets!*

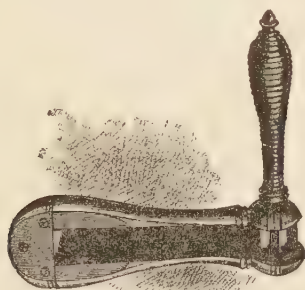
The shrill voice of the Crier penetrated to the farthest limits of the city, and was the signal for the citizens to fall upon the pile of buckets and attempt to extricate their own. The distribution was an event of the utmost importance to the small boys, who fought one another for the privilege of carrying home the buckets owned by rich men. The lads who obtained these prizes and delivered them to their owners were rewarded with small coins, pieces of cake, or *horribile dictu*, glasses of wine, for those were unregenerate days, and alcohol had not yet become an obsolete beverage.

3

NEW YORK had no organized police force during the first half-century of its existence, but in the early years of Stuyvesant's administration the city was guarded at night by the Burgher-Wacht, in which all of the male inhabitants served in turn. But in November, 1653, soon after the completion of the lines of palisades along Wall Street, the Watchmen went on strike because Stuyvesant had curtly ordered them to buy firewood for the watch-houses at their own expense. Peace was restored after much controversy, but the Councillors had lost faith in the Burgher-Wacht. Moreover, fewer and fewer citizens were willing to watch at night. So on April 29, 1654, the Council authorized the appointment of a paid force of from four to six men, who were to patrol the city from nine o'clock at night until morn-

THE WORSHIPFUL FIRE WARDENS

ing drumbeat, and once each hour stand on a corner and bawl the time and the state of the weather. But no one volunteered to serve, and the project was abandoned. It was revived in 1658, during the agitation for better fire protection, and on October 4th of that year New York's first police force was organized and put upon the streets.¹⁷ They were each paid twenty-four stivers (about forty-eight cents) for every night they watched, and were promised one or two beavers for candles, and from two hundred to three hundred pieces of firewood. Each man was armed with a



Watchman's Rattle

musket, a sword, and a pistol. He also carried a huge wooden rattle, which he manipulated as he cried the hour and the weather, producing a fearful clamor comparable to modern radio static. Usually the Watchman yelled, "By the Grace of God, two o'clock in peace," or "By the Grace of God, four o'clock and a cold, raw morning." But sometimes he added to the commotion caused by rattle by bursting into song:

*Hark ye, neighbors, and hear me tell,
Ten now strikes on the belfry bell.
Ten were the holy commandments given,
To men below by God in Heaven.
Human watch from harm can't ward us,
Yet God will watch and guide and guard us.
May He, through His Heavenly might,
Give us all a blessed night.*

The official name of this pioneer police force was the Rattle-Watch, but it was soon dubbed the Prowlers by the disrespectful citizenry, who even in those early days were inclined to sniff at the minions of the law. Nevertheless, the force was efficient, and was gradually enlarged until within ten years the ears of the suffering burghers were occasionally smitten by the noise of more than fifty rattles rattling in concert. The original ordinance of appointment instructed the members of the Rattle-Watch to do police and guard duty only, and so literally did they obey that when an abandoned log house on the present site of the Aquarium at the Battery burned late in 1658, they failed to give the alarm, to the great indignation of the Councillors, the Burgomasters and the Schepens. Thereafter it was the duty of the Watchmen to look out for fires, to whang their rattles only when necessary to raise an alarm and get the citizens out of bed, to gather up the buckets after the excited householders had thrown them into the street, to carry the receptacles to the scene of the conflagration, and to assist and superintend the people who formed in line to hurl water upon the flames. The Prowlers were thus not only New York's first police force, but the first fire company as well.

4

WITH approximately eight hundred houses, a population of some three thousand, a plentitude of fire buckets, and a police force which showed no mercy to evil-doers and was capable of making more noise than any similar body of men on the American continent, New York considered, as the eighteenth century approached, that it had begun to grow up, and the records of the period contain many boastful accounts of the city's beauties and conveniences. But even greater wonders and improvements were destined to follow the establishment of the Rattle-Watch. In 1693 Wall Street was paved to a width of ten feet in

THE WORSHIPFUL FIRE WARDENS



The Prowlers Going on Duty

front of the line of houses which faced the palisades, and a few of the more progressive citizens laid sidewalks in front of their property. Moreover, during that same year the Common Council ordered eight of the downtown streets paved with pebble stones, each citizen to pay according to the



New York Harbor in 1700

frontage of his property. It was also commanded that "the poisonous and stinking weeds before everyone's door be forthwith plucked up." And about three years later, in 1696, the first three-story house was erected in Pearl Street, opposite Cedar, by a member of the DePeyster family.

But the city did not really don municipal long trousers until November, 1697, three years before the government abandoned the old Stadt Huys and removed to the new City Hall at Broad and Wall Streets, where in later years George Washington was inaugurated President. In that month the Aldermen enacted this ordinance:

The Board, taking into consideration the great inconvenience that attends this city, being a trading place, for want of having lights in the dark time of the moon in the winter season, it is therefore ordered that all and every of the housekeepers within this city shall put out lights in the windows fronting the respective streets of their city, between this and the twenty-fifth of March next, in the following manner: Every seventh house, in all the streets, shall, in the dark time of the moon, cause a lantern and candle to be

THE WORSHIPFUL FIRE WARDENS

hung out on a pole, the charge to be defrayed equally by the inhabitants of the said seven houses.

This was the first attempt to light the streets of New York, and the twinkling candles were the forerunners of the dazzling electrical displays which now greet visitors to the metropolis. The system proved both popular and satisfactory, and continued in use until 1762, when the General Assembly authorized the city to purchase lamps and poles, and to hire lamplighters. Four years later a contract was made with Jacobus Stoughtenburgh to supply oil and light the lamps, for which he was paid seven hundred and sixty dollars a year. This method of illumination was employed until 1825, when the New York Gas Company was given a franchise to light the city below Canal Street, despite strenuous opposition from citizens who feared explosions. The first use of gas in New York was in 1823, when it was installed in the home of Samuel Leggett, president of the gas company, at No. 7 Cherry Street, near Franklin Square.



FIRE ENGINES

I

THE APPOINTMENT of the Worshipful Fire Wardens and the organization of the Rattle-Watch were the beginnings of New York's fire-fighting force, but the foundation of the famous volunteer department which was destined to add such spectacular chapters to the city's history was really laid in 1731, when a half-century of agitation for fire engines at last bore results. At a meeting of the Common Council on November 18, 1730, influential citizens urged the Aldermen to purchase both a fire engine and a device invented by Zachary Greyaal, which appears to have been the forerunner of the sprinkler system now in general use in office and loft buildings.¹ But the matter was too momentous to be decided without great deliberation, and accordingly definite action was postponed. Early in 1731 property owners again besought the Council to provide better fire protection, and called the attention of the city fathers to the sensation which had been aroused in London by a remarkable fire engine invented by Richard Newsham. In appearance Newsham's machine was simply an oblong box mounted upon four block wheels of thick plank, with a high condenser case at one end. It had not occurred to the inventor to place a traveller under the front wheels, so that when the machine turned a corner, unless there was a wide sweep of ground, the firemen had to lift it around and head it in the proper direction. It was played by staves fixed

through levers along the sides of the box, or by treadles upon which men worked with their feet. The interior of the box contained a piston rod arrangement by means of which water, having been poured into the engine from buckets, was forced through an immovable pipe ² which projected a few feet into the air. In a broadside which was much commented upon in the New York of the period, Newsham thus advertised the product of his engineering genius:

Richard Newsham, of Cloth Fair, London, engineer, makes the most substantial and convenient engines for quenching fires, which carries continual streams with great force. He hath played several of them before his majesty and the nobility at St. James, with so general an approbation that the largest was at the same time ordered for the use of that royal palace. The largest engine will go through a passage about three feet wide, in complete working order, without taking off or putting on anything, and may be worked with ten men in the said passage. One man can quickly and with ease move the largest size about in the compass it stands in, and it is to be played without rocking, upon any uneven ground, with the hands and feet or feet only, which cannot be paralleled by any other sort whatsoever. There is conveniency for twenty men to apply their full strength, and yet reserve both ends of the cistern clear from incumbrance, that others, at the same time, may be pouring in the water which drains through large copper strainers. The staves that are fixed through leavers, along the sides of the engines, for the men to work by, though very light, as alternate motions with quick turns require, yet will not spring and lose time the least; but the staves of such engines as are wrought at the ends of the cistern will spring or break if they be of such length as is necessary for a large engine when considerable power is applied; and cannot be fixed fast, because they must at all times be taken

out before the engine can go through a passage. . . . As to the treddles on which men work with their feet, there is no method so powerful, with the like velocity or quickness, and more natural safe for the men. Great attempts have been made to exceed, but none could yet equal this sort, the fifth size of which hath played above the grasshopper upon the Royal Exchange, which is upwards of fifty-five yards high, and this in the presence of many thousand spectators. . . . The five large sizes go upon wheels, well boxed with brass, fitted to strong iron axles, and the other is to be carried like a chair.

The members of the Common Council were tremendously impressed by the reputed achievements of Newsham's machines, and finally yielded to the importunities of the citizens. On May 6, 1731, the Councillors unanimously adopted the following resolution — and New York thus became the first municipality in America to negotiate the purchase of a fire engine:

Resolved, with all convenient speed to procure two complete fire engines, with suctions and materials thereto belonging, for the public service; that the sizes thereof be of the fourth and sixth sizes of Mr. Newsham's fire engines; and that Mr. Mayor, Alderman Cruger, Alderman Rutgers, and Alderman Roosevelt, or any of them, be a committee to agree with some proper merchant or merchants to send to London for the same by the first conveniency, and report upon what terms the said fire engines, etc., will be delivered to this corporation.

On June 12, 1731, the committee reported that Messrs. Stephen DeLancey and John Moore, merchants, had agreed to import the engines on the next voyage of the ship *Beaver* at an advance of one hundred and twenty per cent. on the

FIRE ENGINES

foot of the invoice, payment to be made within nine months of delivery.³ Late in November of the same year the *Beaver* was sighted off the Battery, and on December 3rd the machines were unloaded and hauled with much ceremony to City Hall, at Wall and King, now Nassau, Streets. There they were officially designated No. 1 and No. 2 and stowed in separate sheds in the rear of the Hall, the former on the east side of the building and No. 2 facing King Street. Three days later the engines were first used to throw water upon a fire, as related in an item, dated December 7, 1731, in the "News From New York" column of the *Boston Weekly News Letter* of January 6, 1732:

Last night, about twelve o'clock, fire broke out in a joiner's house in this city. It began in the garret, where the people were all asleep, and burnt violently; but by the aid of the two fire engines which came from London in the ship *Beaver*, the fire was extinguished after having burnt down the house and damaged the next.

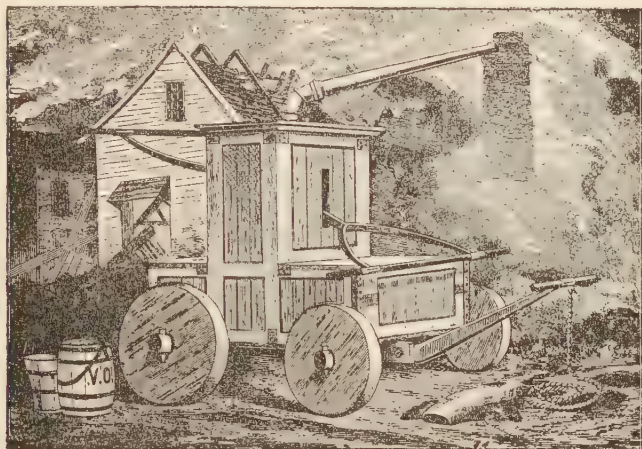
Immediately after the arrival of the machines Peter Rutgers, brewer and Assistant Alderman from the North Ward, was appointed "Overseer of Fire Engines." He resigned within a few months, and Alderman John Roosevelt, a merchant, served until January, 1735, when Anthony Lamb, who manufactured mathematical instruments at "The Sign of the Quadrant and Surveying Compass,"⁴ near the Old Slip, assumed the office at an annual salary of twelve pounds, with allowances for oil, tallow and repairs. In the spring of 1736 the first engine house in New York was erected in the center of Broad Street, between Wall Street and Exchange Place, and both of the Newsham machines were transferred to the new building. About a year later, on December 16, 1737, the General Assembly made possible the formation of the volunteer fire department by enacting

a law which authorized the Common Council to appoint not more than forty-two "strong, able, discreet, honest and sober men" as the "Firemen of the City of New York."⁵ They were "to have the care, management, working and using of the fire engines, and other tools and instruments for extinguishing fires," and to be "ready at a call, both by night and by day." Under the terms of the law the firemen were "freed, exempted and privileged from the several offices of Constable and Surveyor of the Highways, and of and from the being put into or serving upon any juries or inquest and of and from being compellable to serve in the militia, or any of the independent companies of or in the said city, except in cases of invasion or other imminent danger." Thirty men were appointed and organized under the leadership of Jacobus Turck, a gunsmith, who had succeeded Anthony Lamb as "Overseer of Fire Engines," and who remained at the head of the fire department for more than twenty-five years.⁶ Turck led the fire fighters to the scenes of their labors, but they were actually commanded by the Sheriff, Deputy Sheriffs, High Constable, Petty Constables, and Marshals, who were required to attend all conflagrations, bearing their "rods, staves and other badges of authority." These officials were also directed to "seize and apprehend all ill-disposed persons that they find stealing or pilfering from the inhabitants" during a fire.

The arrival of Newsham's fire engines had inspired American engineers and mechanics, and soon a score were busily trying to manufacture engines of their own. Jacobus Turck began one in 1736, and the Common Council voted him ten pounds to pay for labor and materials, but when completed it would not throw water, though its handsome appearance attracted much favorable attention. Two others built by Bartholomew Weldern, a mechanic, were likewise failures. Another was constructed by William Lindsay, who thus advertised it in the *New York Gazette* for May 9,

FIRE ENGINES

1737: "A fire-engine, that will deliver two hogsheads of water in a minute, in a continual stream, is to be sold by William Lindsay, the maker thereof." Prospective purchasers were directed to apply at the Fighting Cocks, a low groggery in Dock Street, now Pearl, adjoining the famous Exchange Coffee House. There is no record that Lindsay



First Fire Engine Built in the United States

ever used his machine, and history is silent as to whether it would perform the feats which its manufacturer claimed for it. The first successful fire engine known to have been built in New York, and probably in America, was constructed by Thomas Lote, a coppersmith and shipbuilder who had a shop at the foot of Fair Street. The machine was delivered to the city late in 1743, and immediately installed in a new house at Broadway and Warren Street. It was similar to Newsham's machine, and, though officially No. 3, was popularly known as Old Brass Backs, for Lote had been lavish in his use of brass fittings.

When the first domestic fire engine was put into service New York was still smaller than either Boston or

Philadelphia, but was growing very rapidly, the city limits having already extended northward to Warren Street, far beyond the boundaries fixed by Pieter Stuyvesant in 1656 "to remain, from this time forward, without alteration." A census taken in 1744 showed a grand total of one thousand, one hundred and forty-one houses, and a population of some twelve thousand persons, of whom about one-sixth were Negro and Indian slaves. Houses were no longer built of logs and thatched with reeds and straw, but were substantial structures of brick, with tile or shingle roofs. "Many of the houses," wrote Prof. Peter Kalm⁷ who visited the city in 1648, "have a balcony on the roof, on which the people sit in the evenings in the summer time; and from thence they have a pleasant view of a great part of the town, and likewise of part of the adjacent water and of the opposite shore. The walls of the houses are white-washed within, and I did not anywhere see hangings, with which the people in this country seem in general to be little acquainted. The walls are quite covered with all sorts of drawings and pictures in small frames. On each side of the chimney they usually have a sort of alcove, and the wall under the window is wainscotted, with benches near the window. The alcoves, as well as all of the woodwork, are painted with a bluish-gray color. The streets do not run so straight as those of Philadelphia, and have sometimes considerable bendings; however, they are very spacious and well-built, and most of them are paved, excepting in high places, where it has been found useless. In the chief streets there are trees planted, which, in summer, give them a fine appearance, and during the excessive heat at that time afford a cooling shade. I found it extremely pleasant to walk in the town, for it seemed quite like a garden. The trees, which are planted for this purpose, are chiefly of two kinds; the water-beech is the most numerous, and gives an agreeable shade in summer by its large and numerous leaves. The

locust tree is likewise frequent; its fine leaves, and the odoriferous scent which exhales from its flowers, make it very proper for being planted in the streets, near the houses, and in the gardens. There are likewise lime trees and elm trees in these walks, but they are not, by far, so fragrant as the others. Besides numbers of birds of all kinds which make these trees their abode, there are likewise a kind of frog, which frequents them in great numbers during the summer. They are very clamorous in the evenings, and in the nights (especially when the days have been hot and a rain is expected), and in a manner drown the singing of the birds. They frequently make such a noise that it is difficult for a person to make himself heard."

Despite the improvement in methods of construction, New York continued to suffer severely from conflagrations; the house in which a fire started was almost invariably destroyed. It was seldom that one of the early engines could throw a stream of water higher than eighty or a hundred feet, and that height, even if reached, could be retained only for a few seconds. When the firemen tired the stream dwindled, and the flames raged on unchecked. The inefficiency of the engines was graphically shown on February 23, 1753, when a fire destroyed the new Free School House on Broadway and spread to the steeple of Trinity Church, then the highest structure on Manhattan Island. Said the next issue of *The Independent Reflector*:

It hath more than once been observed that our engines are incapable of throwing water to such a height as is some times necessary. Of this we had a dreadful instance when the steeple of Trinity Church took fire. On that occasion we observed, with universal horror, that the engines would scarce deliver water to the top of the roof. The spire, however, was far beyond its reach; and had not Providence smiled upon the astounding dexterity and resolution of a few men, who

ascended the steeple from within, that splendid and superb edifice had in all probability been reduced to ashes. . . . Another thing in which our present method of extinguishing fires is capable of further improvement is this: It is usual for people, in case of fire, to form themselves in two lines, the one to convey the full buckets to the engine, and the other to return the empty ones. Now it frequently happens that when the engine is full, word is given to stop water. This occasions a total cessation in the conveyance of water to the engine, as well as the greatest confusion in the ranks; the consequence of which is, that the engine is empty before the ranks regain their former regularity, which creates a considerable intermission in its playing, and gives the fire time to resume its fury; and which, if often repeated, requires a much greater quantity of water for its total suppression. This inconvenience might easily be removed by supplying each engine with a large tub, of at least the size of an hogshead; which, being made of cedar, might be sufficiently strong, and at the same time light enough to be portable by two men. This vessel ought to be placed near the engine, and all the full buckets to be emptied into it. From this capacious tub three or four men might constantly and equally keep the engine replenished, which would enable it to play an equable and uniform stream.

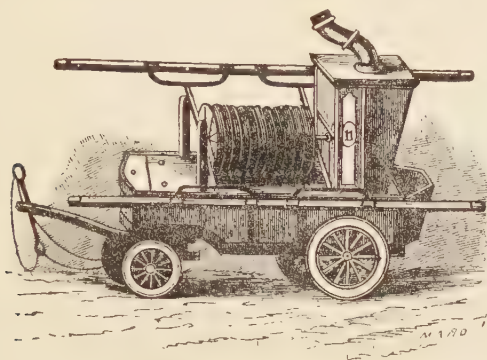
This constructive suggestion was ignored by the Common Council. The Councillors did, however, authorize the "Overseer of Fire Engines" to purchase six speaking trumpets for the use of the city officials.

2

FIRE engines fundamentally similar to those built by Richard Newsham, with various improvements designed to increase their strength and adaptability, were used in New York for more than one hundred years after the first two

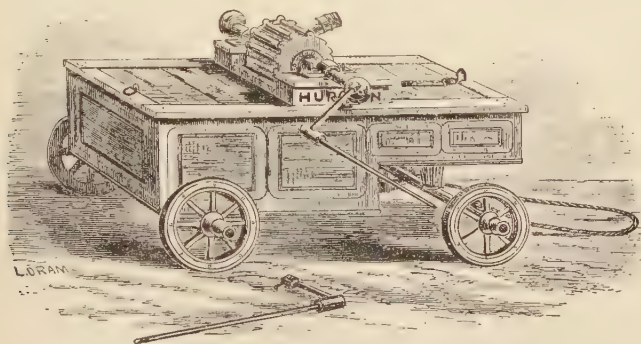
FIRE ENGINES

had been imported from London.⁸ The most important changes were the introduction of the gooseneck, a curved, movable length of metal which made it possible for the fire-



Early Gooseneck Engine

men to control the direction of the stream and obviated the necessity of keeping the engine headed toward the fire; and the construction of an upper deck, as in the Philadelphia or



Fire Engine of 1760

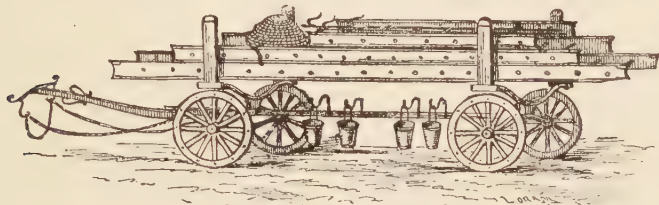
piano engine. The latter type had two sets of brakes at either end, with the condenser case in the middle. It was operated by double rows of men—one on deck and one on the ground—who in action bore a vague resemblance

to the black and white keys of a piano. The Philadelphia machine was extremely heavy, but it was by far the most powerful hand engine ever used in the United States.

Some of the early machines were equipped with crude suction pumps and carried short lengths of suction hose — metallic cylinders covered with leather or canvas and placed end to end — which were dropped into cisterns, wells, ponds, or rivers, so that the water might be sucked into the engine. During the last half of the eighteenth century the cylinders were replaced by leather hose, which had been in use in Europe since 1672, when it was invented by Jan and Nicholas Van der Heide, inspectors of fire apparatus at Amsterdam. But hose of any considerable length was not used in New York until 1790, when John Halsey, a merchant, imported from Hamburg two German fire engines and enough hose to convey water from the East and Hudson Rivers to the interior of the city. Even then — more than a hundred years after its invention — the hose was not equal to the work demanded of it, for the seams were sewed with simple stitches similar to those on the leg of a boot, and the pressure of the water invariably caused them to open. Really satisfactory hose was not produced until 1808, when Sellers & Pennock, Philadelphia manufacturers, began fastening the seams with copper rivets. Soon thereafter the firemen learned to detach the pipe, or nozzle, from the gooseneck and attach it to the end of a length of hose. They were thus enabled to approach closer to a fire, and could manipulate the stream to much greater effect. The firemen lugged the hose upon their shoulders until 1822, when David J. Hubbs, Foreman of Engine Company No. 13, built the first hose-cart, which was popularly known as Hubbs's Baby. It was simply a crude wooden reel placed on the axle of two cart wheels, and was either attached to an engine by tail-hooks or drawn by two firemen. Special hose companies were formed soon afterward. Hooks and ladders were also car-

FIRE ENGINES

ried by hand for many years after their introduction, but about 1750, when the ladders had become long and unwieldy, carts were provided for this apparatus. Twenty-



New York's First Hook and Ladder Truck

two years later the first hook and ladder company was organized.

Until a few years before the Civil War, when the introduction of the steam fire engine compelled the general use of horses, the firemen hauled their engines and hose carts to a conflagration by means of a long drag-rope at which all members of a company lent a hand, although horses were occasionally employed during bad weather. They were much used during the cholera epidemic of 1832, when the department was greatly weakened by sickness and death among the firemen. In November of that year the Common Council authorized the payment to James Gulick, Chief Engineer, of \$863.75 for horses "to drag the engines to the fires during the late epidemic."



THE WATER SUPPLY

I

IN EARLY colonial days most of the water used to quench the flames that so often threatened to destroy New York was dipped in buckets and pails from the East and Hudson Rivers and the sluggish stream which flowed along the present line of Broad Street northward to Exchange Place.¹ A few of the richer citizens dug wells from which water was raised by windmills, but they were useless when there was no wind, and, being on private land, were not always available. The first public well in New York was dug in front of the Fort south of the Bowling Green during the summer of 1658, some ten years after Pieter Stuyvesant had become Director-General of New Netherland. About twenty years later, in 1677, the municipal authorities ordered six more wells, and in 1687 seven others were dug, all in the center of various important thoroughfares. One of the largest was in Broadway between the present Liberty and Cortlandt Streets. Another was on the south side of City Hall Park, then the northern limits of the town and still pretty much of a wilderness, and a third was on the shore of the Hudson below St. Paul's Church. The city contributed eight pounds toward the cost of each well, and the remainder was assessed against the owners of adjacent property, none of whom was permitted to use the water until he had paid his share. A few of the wells were equipped with windmills, but from most the water was procured by the ancient Egyp-

tian method of a bucket and a balance pole. About 1750 several small hand-pumps were installed, but to fight the fires that occurred along the water front the firemen and citizens continued to dip up water in buckets until 1792, when the Common Council ordered "an experiment to be made with a copper pump for drawing water out of the river in case of fire, thereby preventing the disagreeable necessity of the inhabitants going down to the slips and handing up the water in buckets." The experiment was successful, and when the pump was officially placed in service, in January, 1793, James Kip and his son Richard were appointed to take charge of it and conduct it to fires.

A hundred years after the first well had been dug there were at least fifty scattered throughout the city, but the water in a great majority was brackish and unpalatable. All except the very poor bought their supplies for drinking and cooking from vendors who filled their hogsheads and barrels at the three or four good wells, which were called Tea-Water Wells because they produced the only water fit for making tea. It was delivered by contract in carts, or hawked through the streets at about a cent and a half a pail. During the colonial period and the early years of the Republic water was very scarce in New York, and until the completion of the Croton System in 1842 it remained an important article of barter. As late as 1830 a famous tavern at Beekman and South Streets bought forty gallons a day, at a cost of about seven dollars a week. Lack of water was one of the greatest contributing causes of the cholera and yellow fever epidemics which swept the city during the last half of the eighteenth century and the first thirty years of the nineteenth. Seven hundred and thirty-two people died of yellow fever in 1795, and two thousand and eighty-six in 1798, two years after the Common Council had purchased the present site of Washington Square as a burial ground for the poor. One of the heroic figures of the 1798 epidemic

was a Negro woman named Mary Simpson, but commonly known as Mary Washington, who also originated the custom of observing Washington's Birthday. She had been General Washington's slave, but had been set free while he lived in New York, soon after his inauguration as President. She resided thereafter in a small cabin at Cliff and John Streets, in the basement of which she opened a small store for the sale of butter, milk and eggs, and of pies, cakes and sweetmeats of her own manufacture. Each year on February 22nd she baked a large cake, which she called Washington Cake, and displayed it on a large table, together with a bontiful supply of punch and hot coffee. On a smaller table, nearby, were always an old portrait of Washington, and a small leather trunk on which the initials "G.W." had been outlined with brass-headed nails. Both had been given to her by the first President. Many prominent men soon fell into the habit of paying a ceremonious visit to Mary Washington's basement on the anniversary of her former master's birth, there to eat the cake, drink the punch and coffee, and admire the portrait and trunk. The old woman celebrated every February 22nd until her death, and often expressed the fear that if she did not thus call attention to Washington he would soon be forgotten.

Thousands of families left the city in alarm when yellow fever appeared during the summer of 1798, but Mary Washington remained in the infected district and made it her especial task to provide food for the hundreds of homeless cats that roamed the streets. "Mary Washington and her stout colored servant-girl," wrote Grant Thorburn,² "went every morning with two large sacks to the butcher's, who always cheerfully gave them as many sheep-heads as they could carry. On arriving home, they found five score and five starving cats awaiting their return; straightway each with her hatchet split the skulls and scattered the brains, which the cats ate and were satisfied. I had full share

of starving cats to provide for. The weather being hot, and the windows open, the cats came into the house. We were obliged to keep a woman with a stick to sit by the table, while the servant was placing the food before us. Every day scores of cats met on the pavement opposite my home; every day I placed dishes on the sidewalk, and got many gallons of milk from the kind milkman for the poor cats."

Yellow fever again scourged New York in 1803 and in 1822, hundreds dying each year, and in 1832 Asiatic cholera killed three thousand persons between July 4th and October 1st. During the summer of 1822 the situation became so alarming that a high picket fence was erected from Chambers Street to Roosevelt Street and thence to the East River, and the enclosed area was thickly sprinkled with lime, the inhabitants having first been removed to other sections of the city. But these measures failed to prevent the spread of the fever, and the Common Council at length decided to abandon all that part of New York lying south of the barricade, wherein were located the banks, the insurance offices, the Post Office, the Custom House, and most of the stores and business houses, as well as several thousand dwellings. August 24th was set for the *hegira*, and on that day the roads leading northward were choked with carts, carriages, hacks and wagons, piled high with merchandise and household effects; and with men, women and children, trudging on foot through the stifling dust and heat. The bulk of the population stopped at the village of Greenwich, which had grown up around the country seats of Sir Peter Warren, Oliver Delancey, William Bayard, and other aristocrats, and where temporary stores and houses had been erected. Most of the banks opened offices in wooden shacks on a short thoroughfare which is still called Bank Street because of that circumstance.

Within a few days lower New York was deserted except for the doctors, the nurses, a few watchmen, and the

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

hundreds who were dying of the fever. No traffic moved through the silent streets save the carts which hauled the dead to the burial grounds, and the wagons that came down from the north with food and water. Less than a month after the abandonment of the city a rank growth of weeds and grass choked the unpaved streets and alleys, and vegetation was pushing between the cobblestones of Broadway and other important thoroughfares. The markets in the upper portion of the city, and in Greenwich, offered for sale in mid-September green beans and muskmelons, and other produce, which had been picked by the watchmen from vines growing in Broadway, and in Liberty and Greenwich Streets.

Not until cold weather had checked the epidemic did the people of New York return to their homes.

2

THE earliest and most famous of the old Tea-Water Wells, and the one which produced the best water, was near the present junction of Park Row and Roosevelt Street, a



Chatham Street (Park Row) Tea-water Pump

hundred yards or so from the southern shore of Collect Pond. Originally it was a spring, which was fed from the pond. The right to sell the water to vendors and individuals

THE WATER SUPPLY

was let annually by the city to the highest bidder, who charged cartmen and private buyers whatever he wished. Many of the lessees became wealthy, but one, Abraham Revere, became so discouraged in 1784 by his inability to collect from his customers that he committed suicide. A few years before the Revolution a pump was erected, and the spring transformed into a well twenty feet deep and about



Knapp's Tea-water Pump

four feet in diameter. Thereafter it was known as the Tea-Water Pump. The adjacent grounds were landscaped and highly ornamented and as the "Tea-Water Pump Gardens" soon became a fashionable place of resort for the aristocrats and their ladies, who sat at tables under the shade trees and imbibed beverages prepared with pure, fresh water. Aristocrats without their ladies were more often found at the Tea-Water Tavern across the street. According to the historian Winterbotham, "the average quantity of water drawn daily from this remarkable well [in 1790] is one hundred and ten hogsheads of one hundred and thirty gallons each. In some hot summer days two

hundred and sixteen hogsheads have been drawn from it; and what is very singular, there is never more or less than three feet of water in the well." For more than fifty years the Tea-Water Pump was the city's principal source of good water, and the frequent rumors that it was going dry caused much concern among the inhabitants. However, it never did, and was only abandoned when the northward spread of population defiled its waters, and when the old Collect Pond, which fed it, was filled in. One such rumor, which caused a great deal of apprehension in 1796, was disposed of when William C. Thompson, who had leased the well for that year, published this notice in the *New York Minerva* of December 10th:

A report having been in circulation that the water of the "Tea-Water Pump" begins to fail, and, also, that the proprietor will not allow any more water to be drawn from it than is absolutely necessary for the use of the citizens for tea and drinking, the subscriber begs leave to contradict the said report, and inform the citizens that notwithstanding the extremely dry season, the source of the Tea-Water has not in the least diminished; and so far from his refusing any demand for water, he hereby offers the citizens a plentiful supply for washing and other family uses. Any order for one or more hogsheads of water, directing the place where to be delivered, sent to the Pump, will be immediately attended to. The price of the water is four shillings a hogshead, containing one hundred and forty gallons.

Because the water of the Tea-Water Pump was the best in the city, a fatigued fireman returning from a conflagration usually stopped there to refresh himself with a cool draught, and so take the edge off his thirst before proceeding to his favorite tavern for more serious imbibition. And on summer evenings, when the firemen lounged in their engine houses waiting for an alarm, they sang a ballad that some obscure

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poet had penned in praise of the cold water which gushed from the Pump:

*In the cool of the day when the breezes are lightest,
I rest for awhile on the old oaken stump,
Whose roots nestle down in the weeds and the grasses,
That reach to the curb of the Tea-Water Pump.*

*When the fire is put out and the firemen returning,
How cheerily down the hillside they jump,
Forgetting the smoke, and the heat and the burning,
To quench their hot thirst at the Tea-Water Pump.*

Another song, perhaps one of the best known of early American ballads, is also said to have been inspired by the Tea-Water Pump. Samuel Woodworth, who lived in Duane Street and combined poetry and general authoring with a mercantile business in Wall Street, walked abroad with his wife one sultry evening, and stopped at the old well for a drink. After quaffing a great gourdful of fresh water he remarked:

"This is very refreshing, but how much more refreshing it would be to take a good long draught from the old oaken bucket I left hanging in my father's well at home."

"Wouldn't that be a good subject for a poem?" inquired Mrs. Woodworth.

"So it would," said Mr. Woodworth.

And so it was. For the poet sat him down, Euterpe draped her mantle caressingly across his shoulders, and he wrote *The Old Oaken Bucket*.³

Another famous well, which produced good water but gained greater renown through its connection with the Negro Plot of 1741, was Comfort's Tea-Water Well near the shore of the Hudson River. It was much used by the rich inhabitants of that part of the city, who sent their slaves to the well with kegs and hogsheads, so that in time it became a favorite rendezvous of the blacks. It was, in fact,

about the only place in New York where they could gather in large numbers without fear of punishment, for many stringent laws regulated their conduct. If three Negroes were seen together, each received forty lashes on his bare back; and if a slave was discovered with a club or other weapon, elsewhere than on his master's premises, he was likewise whipped. These and similar laws had been enacted during the excitement and hysteria that followed the Negro Rebellion of 1712, when fifty or more slaves, hidden in an orchard near the present Maiden Lane, set fire to an out-house and then killed nine white men who ran to extinguish the flames. Soldiers from the Fort drove the Negroes into the woods and swamps near the present City Hall Park, and the next day all were captured but six, who committed suicide. Twenty-one were legally executed. Several were burned at the stake, others were hanged, one was hung up in chains to die of starvation, and another was broken on the wheel. This last culprit was fastened face-upward to a hubless wheel laid flat on the ground, and his bones broken one after another with a twenty-pound crowbar.

Near Comfort's Tea-Water Well in 1741, on the present site of No. 10 West Street ⁴ was a low groggery for Negroes, kept by a shoemaker named John Hughson. With Hughson lived his wife, their daughter, Sarah; a woman variously known as Margaret Salingburgh and Peggy Kerry; and a sixteen-year-old girl, Mary Burton, who had been bound to Hughson as a servant. The women were all very dissolute, and assisted Hughson in entertaining the Negroes. Under the direction of the shoemaker the Negroes had formed themselves into clubs, called the Free Masons, the Smith Fly Boys, the Long Bridge Boys, and the Geneva Club, the last being the name of a brand of gin of which they were especially fond. Members of these bands, which were probably the first organized criminal gangs ever to operate in New York, stole whatever they could lay their hands upon

and brought the loot to Hughson, who disposed of it and pocketed a major share of the proceeds. The occasional Negro who was caught was subjected to barbarous punishments, but none ever involved the shoemaker in his crimes.

During the early weeks of 1741 an English man-of-war, the *Flamborough*, brought into port a Spanish ship which had been captured as a prize, and several Negro sailors (the fact that they were Catholics was later held to be of great significance) were sold as slaves. One, named Jack, became the property of Mr. Comfort, who owned the Tea-Water Well. These Negroes were very intractable, and, though often flogged, they repeatedly threatened to kill their masters and destroy the town. They soon began to resort to Hughson's place, and became the leaders of the bands of thieves. Jack, who had been assigned by his master to attend the well, talked to other Negroes who came for water, and induced many of them to join Hughson's gangs, swearing them with an elaborate oath evolved by the shoemaker. A few weeks after the arrival of the Spanish ship Hughson and the Negroes, emboldened by their increasing numbers, put their heads together and, according to the old records, concocted a weird scheme to burn the city and set Hughson up as King of New York, with a Negro named Caesar as Governor. Jack, it appears, was to be Commander-in-Chief of the Army. They expected aid from the Negroes of Long Island, who had formed a company and were secretly drilling with arms and accoutrements stolen from their masters.

On February 28th several pieces of silverware and a small quantity of silver money were stolen from the home of Robert Hogg, at Broad and South William Streets. A few days later Mary Burton, bound servant to Hughson, whom she hated, told a neighbor that her master often secreted stolen goods in his groggery, and that he had employed

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Negroes to steal for him. This information reached the ears of the Magistrates, who ordered the arrest of Hughson, his wife, their daughter, the woman known as Kerry, and Mary Burton, as well as two Negroes, Prince and Caesar, who were accused of the actual robbery. At that time the Magistrates had no knowledge of the supposed plot.

Some three weeks later, on March 18th, a wild and blustery day, fire was discovered in the Governor's house in the Fort, occupied by the Lieutenant-Governor, George Clarke.⁵



The Governor's House in the Fort

Fanned by a strong southeast wind, the flames soon got beyond control and destroyed the building, as well as the King's Chapel, the secretary's home and stables, the barracks, and several smaller structures nearby. Then, in rapid succession, fires damaged the home of Admiral Sir Peter Warren, the store-house of Winant Van Zandt, a cow stable belonging to Mr. Quick, and the home of William Thompson. And the morning after the blaze in Thompson's house live coals were found under a haystack in the coach-house of John Murray, in Broadway. A few days afterward three more fires were discovered — in a dwelling near the Fly Market,

in the home of Sergeant Burns near the Fort, and in the storehouse of Colonel Frederick Philipse. All of these conflagrations occurred within a period of less than two weeks, and the citizens were quick to believe them the work of incendiaries, and especially that the coals found in the Murray coach-house had not been placed there by accident, but by design. Still, not much alarm was felt until a Mrs. Earle, who lived in Broadway, told a neighbor, who immediately relayed the information to the Magistrates, that on the Sunday after the fire in the Fort she had seen three Negroes swaggering up the street in open defiance of the law, and had heard one of them exclaim gleefully, "Fire! Fire! Scorch! A little more mebbby by and by!" The latter Negro, named Quaco, was promptly arrested and tortured, but denied any knowledge of the fires. He said that Mrs. Earle had misunderstood him, that he had been rejoicing over the capture of Porto Bello by an English fleet under the command of Admiral Vernon, news of which had just reached New York. Nevertheless, he was locked up, and suspicion quickly centered upon the Negroes, especially when a rumor spread that a slave had been seen jumping from a window of one of the burning houses. The Magistrates ordered the arrest of every black man who could not tell a satisfactory story, and within a few days one hundred and fifty-four had been lodged in jail.

The municipal authorities now began to hear vague reports of a plot to burn the city, and on April 11, 1741, the Common Council offered one hundred pounds and a full pardon to any conspirator who would divulge the details of the scheme. Mary Burton, languishing in jail for her master's crimes, immediately went before the Magistrates and told half a dozen different stories, in all of which she involved Hughson, his wife and daughter, Margaret or Peggy Kerry, and several of the Negroes who had been sold as slaves from the Spanish ship. She declared that Hughson,

the women, and the Negroes had held many secret meetings in the shoemaker's grog shop; and that she had heard them planning to destroy the city, divide the white women among the slaves, and torture and kill the men. It was she who said that Hughson was to be King and the Negro Caesar Governor. Soon afterward Arthur Price, servant to Captain Vincent Pearse, who was in prison for stealing property belonging to the Lieutenant-Governor, gained his freedom by corroborating Mary Burton's story, to which he added various unimportant details quite obviously of his own invention. Even a cursory examination of the records discloses the discrepancies and absurdities with which the stories of Mary Burton and Price abound, but neither the Magistrates nor the people were in any judicial frame of mind, and were not inclined to make an impartial investigation of the evidence. Publication of the details of the plot as given by the girl and Price threw New York into a condition of hysterical terror, and a few of the more timorous promptly packed up their valuables and fled northward into the country beyond Chambers Street. This increased the panic, and soon almost the entire population was streaming along the roads leading to the farms in the vicinity of Canal Street, with vehicles of every description piled high with household goods. The fears of the people were further increased early in May by the burning of seven barns in one morning at Hackensack, across the Hudson River in New Jersey, for which two Negroes were burned at the stake within a week.⁶ As the torch was applied one confessed that he had fired three of the barns; the other maintained his innocence to the end.

While hundreds of citizens were fleeing New York in terror, the Magistrates continued their investigations, and on April 21st brought many of the prisoners to trial in the Supreme Court, with Chief Judge DeLancey and Judges Philipse and Horsmanden presiding. Hughson, his wife,

and Peggy Carey, or Kerry, and the Negroes Prince and Caesar, were convicted almost immediately on Mary Burton's evidence, the Kerry woman and the blacks of stealing and secreting the valuables stolen from Robert Hogg's house, and the others of complicity in the conspiracy. Hughson's daughter Sarah was also convicted, but was eventually pardoned and released on condition that she leave New York. Sentence of death was pronounced upon the others by Chief Judge DeLancey, who thus addressed Hughson:

Thou vile wretch! Your hypocritical, canting behaviour upon your trial, your protestations of innocence, your dissimulation before God and man, will be no small article against you at the Day of Judgment. For what saith the Word? They that have done evil and die hardy and impenitent shall be thrown into the infernal lake of fire and brimstone, together with the Devil and his accursed spirits, where the worm never dieth and the fire will never be quenched. In this torment you must remain under the most bitter weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, time without end.

The executions began on May 11, 1741, when Prince and Caesar were hanged in the presence of several thousand excited citizens. On June 12th Hughson, his wife and Peggy Kerry died on the gallows, and after his execution Hughson was gibbeted, and hung in chains at the Battery, alongside the body of the Negro Caesar, for several weeks as a noisome warning to evil-doers. Said the *New York Gazette*:

John Hughson, Sarah his wife, and Margaret Kerry, alias Peggy, were executed according to sentence. The undersheriff had advised John Hughson to make a confession about the conspiracy, but he denied he knew anything of the

matter; he said he had deserved death for receiving stolen goods. The wife was ever sullen; she said little or nothing, but denied all. The sheriffs observed Hughson, when he was brought out of jail to be carried to execution, to have a red spot on each cheek about the bigness of a shilling, which at that time they thought very remarkable, for he was always pale of visage. These spots continued all along to the gallows. Amongst other discourse it seems he had said he did not doubt but some remarkable sign would happen to him to show his innocence. He stood up in the cart all the way, looking round about him as if expecting to be rescued, as was by many conjectured from the air he appeared in. One hand was lifted as high as his pinion would admit of, and a finger pointing as if intending to beckon. At the gallows his wife stood like a lifeless trunk with the rope about her neck. Tied up to the tree, she said not a word and had scarcely any visible emotion. Peggy seemed much less resigned than the other two, as rather unwilling to encounter death. She was going to say something, but the old woman who hung next to her gave her a shove with her hand, so Peggy was silent. But they all died, having protested their innocence to the last touching the conspiracy.

The trail of several score Negroes proceeded while the three white persons awaited execution, and a dozen were convicted and hanged during the week that followed the 12th of June. Two Negroes, named Quaco and Cuffee, were burned at stakes set fifty feet apart near the present site of Nathan Hale's statue in City Hall Park, and others were burned about a hundred yards farther north. On June 19th the Lieutenant-Governor proclaimed a pardon to all who would confess, and Mary Burton made her position even more secure by testifying that John Ury, a Catholic school-teacher who lodged at the unsavory Fighting Cocks, had been involved in the conspiracy, and that she had seen him

at Hughson's tavern in conference with the shoemaker and the Negroes. Ury was tried not only for engaging in the plot, but also for officiating as a priest in violation of the law passed in 1700 to drive the French missionaries out of the Indian country. The evidence against him on either charge was very slight, but the authorities were greatly impressed by a letter from General Oglethorpe, who wrote from Georgia that the Spaniards had formed a gigantic conspiracy to burn every English town in North America, and had employed many Catholic priests as aids. Ury was quickly convicted on both indictments, and was hanged on August 29, 1741. His death put an end to the saturnalia of executions, for Mary Burton, emboldened by her successes, began to make absurd accusations against various persons of consequence, and even declared that some of the Magistrates had been boon companions of Hughson and the Negroes. Her statements were so obviously preposterous that the public temper soon cooled, and both people and judges realized that in all likelihood the plot had never existed save in the fertile imagination of Mary Burton. Within a short time after the hanging of Ury the investigation was abandoned, and the prisoners who remained in jail were released. But enough mischief had already been done — fourteen Negroes had been burned at the stake, twenty had been hanged, and seventy-one had been transported to other colonies. Twenty-four white persons had been arrested, of whom four had been hanged. One white man and two Negroes had been gibbeted, a circumstance which inspired a reporter for the *New York Gazette* to produce this choice example of eighteenth century journalism:

When Mr. Duane's Prince, Mr. Latham's Tony, Mr. Shurmur's Tony, and Mr. Marschalk's York were executed at the gallows according to sentence, the body of York was afterwards hung in chains upon the same gibbet with John

Hughson. Also, the town was amused with a rumor that Hughson was turned Negro, and Mr. Garick's Caesar a white. When they came to put York in chains by Hughson — who was hung upon the gibbet three weeks before — so much of him as was visible, face, neck, hands and feet, were of a deep shining black, rather blacker than York, who was one of the darkest hue of his kind. And the hair of Hughson's beard and neck — his head could not be seen, for he had a cap on — was curling like the wool of a Negro's beard and head, and the features of his face was of the symmetry of a Negro beauty, the nose broad and flat, the nostrils open and extended, the mouth wide, lips full and thick. His body, which when living was tall, upwards of six feet, but very meagre, had swelled to a gigantic size. Caesar, who had been hung up in chains a month before Hughson, and was also of the darkest complexion, his face was somewhat bleached or turned whitish, insomuch that it occasioned the jesting remark that Hughson and he had changed colors. Many of the spectators were ready to resolve them into miracles. However, others, not so hasty, were willing to account for them in a natural way. The sun at this time has great power, and the season as usual so very hot, that Hughson's body dripped and distilled very much, as it needs be from the great fermentation and abundance of matter within him, as could not be supposed at that time from the extraordinary bulk of his body; though, considering the force of the sun and the natural meagreness of his corpse, one would have been apt to imagine that long ere this it would have been disencumbered of all juices. At length, about ten days or a fortnight after Hughson's mate, York, was hung by him, Hughson's corpse, unable longer to contain its load, burst and discharged pailfuls of blood and corruption. This was testified by those who were nearby, fishing upon the beach. Whatever were the causes of these changes, the facts are here related that everyone may make

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their own conjectures upon them. Hughson, as he was going to mount the cart which was to carry him to execution, declared that he did not doubt some remarkable sign would happen to him to shew his innocence. If his corpse becoming monstrous in size, and his complexion as black as the d——l, can be deemed signs or tokens of his innocence, then some may imagine it has happened according to his expectation.

Whether or not Hughson's execution produced a miracle, a very natural fate overtook Comfort's Tea-Water Pump—it had gained such an evil reputation as one of the meeting place of the conspirators, and so many rumors were afloat that poison had been dumped into it, that it was practically abandoned. Even after the commotion had subsided its water was seldom used if any other could be obtained.

3

THE rapid increase in New York's population during the period which immediately preceded the Revolution, and the extension of the city's corporate limits far beyond the wildest dreams of the original settlers, soon made it apparent that a serious water shortage was only a matter of time, and many schemes were suggested to insure a bountiful supply.⁷ In 1774 the Common Council approved a project suggested by Christopher Colles⁸ to construct an enormous reservoir, fill it from wells and then pipe the water through the streets, with small pumps installed at various corners by which the fire engines could be supplied. The city authorized the purchase of the land on the east side of Broadway from Pearl to White Streets at a cost of six hundred pounds an acre as the site of the reservoir, but the plan was abandoned at the outbreak of the Revolution. In 1798 the municipal authorities considered a plan to pipe the waters of the Bronx River into Manhattan, but New

York's first waterworks system was not actually begun until 1799, when Aaron Burr and his associates organized the Manhattan Water Company and offered to introduce water from the Rye Ponds in Westchester through an open canal to the Harlem River, and thence down Manhattan Island by means of an elevated iron pipe to a great reservoir. From there it was to be piped through the streets. The Assembly granted the company a trick charter under which it was afterward enabled to engage in various financial and business enterprises, and it still gives part of its name to one of New York's banking houses. Burr's corporation did very little toward carrying out its announced plans for a waterworks system, although it did dig a few wells and construct a reservoir in Chambers Street between Broadway and Center Street about where the Hall of Records and the building of the Immigrant Trust Company now stands. A few miles of bored logs were also laid, none of which extended above Grand Street and Broadway on the western side of the city, nor above Pearl Street on the east. New York had a population of about sixty thousand when Burr's company was chartered, and the Manhattan water was never sufficient for the city's requirements. Not only was it necessary to refill the small Chambers Street reservoir five times every twenty-four hours, but the company made no attempt to purify the water, and increasing congestion of population soon made it unfit to drink.

In theory the wooden pipes could be tapped to fill the fire engines by withdrawing large corks inserted in the logs at various points along the route, but the flow of water was usually so tardy that the system was seldom an effective aid to the fire department, except in a few localities where the natural rise of the ground gave a considerable force to the stream. The corks were known as fire-plugs, a designation which is still generally applied to the modern fire hydrant. The first actual hydrant in New York was installed in 1817

by George B. Smith, a member of Engine Company No. 12 and confidential agent for John Jacob Astor. Smith built the hydrant at his own expense in front of his home in Frankfort Street, but its usefulness was destroyed within a few years by the failure of the Manhattan Company to fulfill its obligations. A few other hydrants were installed as additional wooden and iron pipes were laid from time to time, and in 1831 special hydrant companies were formed to care for them, but these organizations were found to be unnecessary, and within a few years were disbanded, the hose company thereafter performing their duties.

An eighty foot well dug by the Manhattan Company in an open meadow about a hundred feet north of the present Spring Street and a hundred feet east of Greene Street achieved considerable fame as the scene of one of New



Residence of Miss Sands

York's first unsolved murder mysteries — the unfortunate death of Miss Juliana Elmore Sands, who lived with her uncle, Elias Ring, in a gabled mansion at Provost, now Franklin, and Greenwich Streets. Miss Sands appears to have been a young lady of extraordinary gifts. As described by a neighbor in a letter to a newspaper after the murder, she

was "uniformly cheerful and serene, and on the day previous to the murder remarkably so. Her temper was mild and tranquil; her manners artless and tender; her conversation ever chaste and innocent. She was one of those virtuous characters against whom the tongue of slander never moves." On the evening of Sunday, December 23, 1799, this paragon of feminine virtue left the home of her uncle to go sleigh-riding with Levi Weeks, a boarder in the Ring home, to whom she was to have been married the next day. She was never again seen alive, but on the afternoon of Thursday, January 2, 1800, her body was found at the bottom of the Manhattan Company's well. Several persons told the watchmen that on the morning after the murder they had seen the tracks of a one-horse sleigh, such as was owned by Weeks, near the well; and two persons, a man and his wife, said that they had heard a female, apparently in great distress, crying, "O Lord! Have mercy! Do help me!"

Weeks was arrested several days after the finding of the young woman's body, and on March 31, 1800, was brought to trial in the Court of Oyer and Terminer, with Chief Justice John Lansing presiding. The murder and the apprehension of Miss Sand's *fiancé* had caused tremendous excitement, and on the day of the trial the courtroom, the avenue leading to the courthouse, and the pathways about the City Hall, were thronged with a great multitude. Weeks was defended by a formidable array of noted lawyers, among them Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, while the prosecutor was Attorney-General Cadwallader D. Colden. Hamilton took notes of the testimony in his own hand, writing the names of the witnesses in carefully drawn old-English characters. "As the trial proceeded," wrote James Parton in his life of Burr, "suspicions arose against the principal witness, and Colonel Burr became convinced that the guilt lay between the prisoner and the witness. Hamilton had

addressed the jury with his usual fluent eloquence, confining his remarks to the vindication of the prisoner, without alluding to the probable guilt of the witness. Colonel Burr in turn arose. He set forth the facts which bore against the man, and then seizing two candelabra from the table he held them up toward the witness and exclaimed, 'Behold the murderer, gentlemen!' Every eye was turned upon the wretch's ghastly countenance, which seemed to wear the very expression of a convicted murderer. The man reeled, shrank away, and rushed from the room. The effect of this incident was conclusive. Colonel Burr concluded his speech, the Judge charged, the jury gave a verdict of acquittal, and the prisoner was free."

When the finding of the jury was announced Miss Sands' aunt, Mrs. Ring, arose in her seat and, pointing a finger at Hamilton, cried, "If thee dies a natural death I shall think there is no justice in Heaven!" Four years later Burr killed Hamilton in their celebrated duel, and twenty-nine years after the trial Justice Lansing left his hotel to post a letter on the Albany boat and never returned. The witness who had been accused by Burr was not arrested, and the mystery was never solved. For many years the Spring Street well was an object of morbid curiosity, and was well known to be haunted by the ghost of the beautiful Miss Sands. Each night at midnight screams were heard proceeding from its darkened depths, the water was seen to be in a ferment, and numerous persons reported that they had seen fireballs hovering over the pump. Moreover, a shivery figure in white flitted hither and yon about the mouth of the well. The haunt was laid when the well was at length filled in.

With the collapse of the Manhattan Waterworks and the failure of the public and private wells to provide an adequate supply of water for the fire engines, New York in June, 1825, began the construction of cisterns, more than

fifty of which were built during the next ten years. The capacity of each was about one hundred hogsheads of water. They were kept filled by gangs of convicts from the Penitentiary, in striped suits and laden with ball and chain, who pumped water into them with old engines which had outlived their usefulness and had been deposited in the Corporation Yard, now the site of the Tombs. The largest cisterns were built near the churches, though the oldest places of worship, such as Trinity and St. Paul's, had none. They were only slightly more satisfactory than the wells of the Manhattan Company, but they sufficed until July 4, 1842, when the aqueduct which ran forty miles from the Croton River was completed and the water turned into the distributing reservoir at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, where the Public Library now stands. This system was the beginning of New York's present water supply.

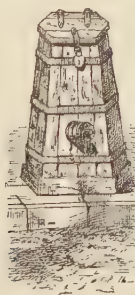
The opening of the Croton Aqueduct was celebrated on October 14, 1842, with a great parade sponsored and arranged by the firemen, who were each taxed twenty-five cents to pay for it. The procession was about eight miles long, and included engine and hose companies, with apparatus, from New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Newark, Albany, and other cities, as well as temperance societies and other organizations. There were also a balloon ascension at Castle Garden (now the Aquarium) at the Battery, a Croton Jubilee at the Park Theatre, and a specially written play, *The Croton Celebration*, at the old Bowery Theatre, to say nothing of much bombastic oratory. And at the request of the city authorities George P. Morris, author of the famous poem, *Woodman, Spare That Tree!* wrote an ode which was set to music and sung by members of the Sacred Music Society, massed in front of the great fountain in City Hall Park, about where Civic Virtue now simpers:

THE WATER SUPPLY

*Water leaps as if delighted,
While her conquered foes retire!
Pale contagion flies affrighted,
With the baffled demon Fire!
Water shouts a glad hosanna!
Bubbles up the earth to bless!
Cheers it like the precious manna
In the barren wilderness.*

*Round the aqueducts of story,
As the mists of Lethe throng,
Croton's waves, in all their glory,
Troop in melody along.
Ever sparkling, bright and single
Will this rock-ribbed stream appear,
When posterity shall mingle
Like the gathered waters here.*

The ceremonies were so impressive, and the opening of the new system such a tremendously important event, that for many years the word croton was commonly used in New York as a synonym for water. The records of the old engine and hose companies are replete with allusions to "streams of croton," and no one ever thought of asking for a glass of water. It was always a "glass of croton."



An Early Hydrant

FIREMAN GEORGE WASHINGTON

I

THE OLD hand engines with which the early New York firemen were equipped were extraordinarily cumbersome despite occasional improvements in their construction and mechanism, and operating them was back-breaking labor. Fighting a fire was in every way a dangerous and a disagreeable task, and the greatest reward the firemen might hope for was exemption from a few unimportant civic duties. Nevertheless, membership in the department was considered a badge of honor, and throughout the existence of the volunteer system some of America's most famous men were members of various engine and hose companies. Aaron Burr, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton were among them, and so was George Washington, who was one of the most enthusiastic firemen in the America of his time. His love for the engines gave a distinction to fire-fighting that doubtless had much to do with the enormous influence exerted by the volunteer departments throughout the land. To some extent, indeed, this prestige survives to modern times, for in almost every city there are many rich men who enroll as honorary firemen and equip their sleeping chambers with bells and gongs, that they may not miss an alarm. But Washington was more than a buff, as these amateur smoke-eaters are called; he was a practical and capable fireman, and greatly delighted in manning the brakes of an engine and splashing buckets of water upon the roaring

FIREMAN GEORGE WASHINGTON

flames. He began running to fires when, as a boy in his teens, he lived on the ancestral acres less than ten miles from Alexandria, Virginia, which he visited on horseback as often as ten times a week in quest of innocent merri-



George Washington as a Fireman

ment. And when he died in 1799 he was still following the engines as often and as rapidly as his aging legs would carry him.

Some forty years before the Revolution the principal citizens of Alexandria organized a fire department, and each member agreed to carry to every conflagration two leathern buckets, and "one great bag of oznaburg or wider linnen," in which property in danger of destruction was salvaged. Several residents owned ladders which they offered for fire-fighting purposes, and others bought or manufactured hooks with which they laid waste furniture and woodwork with as much zest and skill as the modern fireman displays with his more modern implements. As in New York, the alarm

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

was given by the watchman, but instead of the huge rattle affected by the metropolitan constabulary, the Alexandrian guardians of the peace carried trumpets slung over their shoulders, upon which they blew terrific blasts whenever a fire was discovered. They also differed from the New Yorkers in details of armament. The latter carried pistols, muskets, and occasionally swords, while the former paraded the unpaved streets of their village armed with spontoons,¹ fearsome weapons which had been left in storage there when Braddock marched his army on its ill-fated expedition into the West. They were appropriated by the municipal authorities, and were used by the watchmen of Alexandria until 1861, when the town was captured by the Yankees and policed by the provost guard of a Michigan regiment.

George Washington became a member of the Alexandria fire department about 1750, when he was eighteen years old, and thereafter combined his search for instructive



George Washington Riding to a Fire

amusement with his duty as a fireman. He was present and laboring valiantly at every fire which occurred on his frequent trips to the town, and he also hurried post haste from his home whenever he discerned the glare of a conflagration

FIREMAN GEORGE WASHINGTON

against the sky, although he seldom arrived until after the fire had been extinguished. He retained his interest in Alexandria's fire-fighting forces even during the clamors and alarums of the Revolution. In 1774, while in Philadelphia as a delegate to the Continental Congress, he received word that he had been elected an honorary member of the newly formed Friendship Fire Company. He promptly interrupted the multitudinous tasks upon which he was engaged as one of the founders of a new nation, and made a thorough inspection of the various types of apparatus used by the Philadelphia department. When he returned to the Pennsylvania city in 1775 he bargained with a manufacturer named Gibbs, and for eighty pounds and ten shillings purchased a small fire engine of the fourth class, which he presented to Friendship Fire Company just before he left for Boston to become commander-in-chief of the American Army.²

Washington's keen regard for the welfare of the firemen was not lessened when he was inaugurated President and came to New York to live in a great mansion in Franklin Square, near the head of Cherry Street. Although no documentary record of the fact exists, he is said to have been an honorary member of the volunteer department, and despite his exalted position and the adoration in which he was held by the people, he ran with the fire engines as often as possible. At serious conflagrations the firemen were frequently inspired by the spectacle of the new world's most heroic figure laboring manfully at the brakes of a fire engine, or lugging great buckets of water with which to feed the monster. He never lost his enthusiasm, and after he had served two terms as President of the United States, and had retired to his estates at Mount Vernon, he was again enrolled as a member of the Alexandria department, and became a familiar figure at the occasional fires that devastated that village's stores and cottages. Only a few months before

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

his death in 1799 he was riding one day down King Street in Alexandria, accompanied by his Negro body-servant, when a fire was discovered near the market. The General stopped his horse, and vigorously rebuked the lazy citizenry when he saw that few had stepped forward to bend their backs at Friendship Company's engine. Finally he shook his



Old Fireman of Alexandria, Va.

riding crop at a group of well-dressed men who stood idly by staring alternately at the fire and at their distinguished visitor.

"It is your duty to lead in such matters!" he shouted.
"Follow me!"

Throwing the reins to his servant, Washington leaped to the ground and began pumping the engine, into which a few boys were languidly dumping buckets of water. Cheer-

ing citizens rushed to aid him, and within a few minutes the old machine was throwing the highest stream that had ever gushed from its pipe.

2

WHEN General Washington, having refreshed himself with a mug of ale at the Bull's Head Tavern³ on the Boston Post Road, now the Bowery, led his ragged soldiers into New York on November 25, 1783, he found the fire department in a sadly demoralized condition. Not only had the metropolis been denuded of experienced fire fighters in 1776 when the entire force, under command of Major Jacobus Stoughtenburg, was evacuated as part of the American Army, but the physical property of the department had deteriorated, and the municipal authorities had made little or no effort to replace lost or damaged apparatus. When the English troops under Lord Howe defeated Washington at the Battle of Long Island and drove the Americans northward to the mainland, New York owned nineteen fire engines of various sizes, as well as several hundred fire buckets, and other appliances for fighting the flames. But when the war was over only fourteen engines and two hook and ladder carts remained, and but one of the engines was in good working order. Hooks and ladders had also been lost and destroyed, and there was scarcely a bucket that would hold water. Great heaps of ruins in the lower part of the city showed how futile had been the efforts of the citizenry to cope with the frequent and disastrous conflagrations. On November 27, 1783, after the American Civil government had supplanted that of the British, the four Engineers of the department thus reported to Governor Clinton, who had entered the city with Washington:

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

To His Excellency George Clinton, Esq., Governor of the State of New York, in America, etc.

May it Please Your Excellency: —

As the change of government has now taken place on the arrival of your Excellency in this city, we, the Fire Engineers of the several Fire Engines and companies belonging to the same, beg leave to lay before your Excellency the state and condition of the fire engines, etc., as also of their several companies and number of men now belonging to the same.

We farther beg leave to represent to your Excellency that the fire-engines, with the other implements belonging, were before the late fire all in good condition, and the companies under good order and regulations; and as there are at present a number of fire-buckets wanting, and also some necessary repairs to be done (occasioned by the late fire) to the several apparatus belonging to the engines, which require immediate dispatch, not knowing how soon they may be wanted, we think it our duty, and therefore take this early opportunity to represent this matter to your Excellency, as the safety and preservation of this metropolis at times depend greatly on keeping the engines in good order.

We now beg leave to inform your Excellency that we held a commission jointly and severally, under the late Governor Robertson, and are happy to say we always gained applause from the citizens for our good conduct in the alarming times of fire in this city. Should it please your Excellency to continue us in this office under your administration, we will always act with such conduct as we make no doubt will, when called upon in time of fire, gain the applause of your Excellency, as well as in the late fire we have of the citizens. We remain, with great respect,

Your Excellency's most obedient and most humble servants,

<i>John Balthasar Dash</i>	<i>Francis Dominick</i>
<i>George Stanton</i>	<i>Jeronimus Alstyne. ^a</i>

Though oppressed by the cares of state and the duties incident to taking over the city from the British, both General Washington and Governor Clinton found time to order a strict inspection of New York's fire-fighting equipment, and immediately urged the Common Council to purchase needed apparatus and to reorganize the department on

FIREMAN GEORGE WASHINGTON

an efficient basis. By January 1, 1784, a little more than a month after the departure of the English Army, all of the fire engines were under repair, and a committee had been appointed to arrange for the manufacture of a great number of new fire buckets. In 1785 a new fire engine was purchased for forty-five pounds, and on February 15, 1786, an entirely new personnel was named, consisting of five engineers, two hook and ladder companies, and fifteen engine companies, the membership of which comprised some three hundred men and included some of the most influential citizens of the town. Washington and the Governor also recommended the passage of fire prevention laws, and in 1785 statutes were enacted regulating the storage of pitch, resin, tar, turpentine, linseed oil and other inflammable liquids and materials; and forbidding "the pernicious practice of firing guns, pistols, rockets, squibs and other fireworks on the last day of December and the first and second days of January." The law imposed a penalty of forty shillings upon any person who fired a gun or other prohibited weapon within a quarter of a mile of any building, and if the fine was not paid the offender went to jail for one month, "there to remain without bail or mainprize."

In 1793, the year in which the houses of New York were first numbered, the Common Council embodied all of the fire laws in a single ordinance, which made provision for the buckets and outlined the duties of the Fire Wardens and the various city officials:

That the inhabitant and owner of every house in this city having less than three fireplaces shall provide one Leather Bucket; and having three fireplaces and under six, two; and having six fireplaces and under nine, four; and having nine fireplaces and upwards, six; and of every Brew-House, Distilling and Sugar-House, nine Buckets; and of

every Bake-House four Buckets, each of which Buckets . . . shall be sufficient to contain at least two Gallons and an half of Water, and shall be marked with at least the initial letters of the Landlord's Name, and shall be hung in the entry or near the Front Door ready to be used for extinguishing fires, when there shall be occasion. The Buckets to be got at the expense of the owner of the house, the tenant having the right to deduct the cost of the same from his rent. Penalty, six shillings for each Bucket not provided.

So many firemen shall from time to time be appointed in each of the Wards of this city as the Common Council shall deem proper, and shall be called Fire Wardens, whose Duty it shall be, immediately on the cry of fire, to repair to the place where it shall be, and to direct the inhabitants in forming themselves into Ranks for handling the Buckets to supply the Fire Engines with Water, in such places and in such manner as they may think will best answer the purpose, under the direction of the Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen, if present. . . . The Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen shall carry at fires a white wand, at least five feet in length, with a gilded flame at the top; and each of the Fire Wardens shall wear upon those occasions a cap with the city arms painted on the front, and the crown painted white, and carry in his hand a speaking trumpet painted white. . . . And it is enjoined on the inhabitants to place a lighted candle at the front window of their respective houses, in order that the people shall pass through the streets with greater safety.

Private citizens were depended upon to furnish fire buckets for about two years, but the system was not very satisfactory, and in 1795 the city stored in each engine house two long poles, on each of which a dozen fire buckets were strung. The first fireman to reach the engine house after an

alarm carried the pipe, or nozzle, and the next four shouldered the bucket poles, while the remainder of the company ran with the engine, "bawling out and demanding the aid of the citizens as they proceeded."

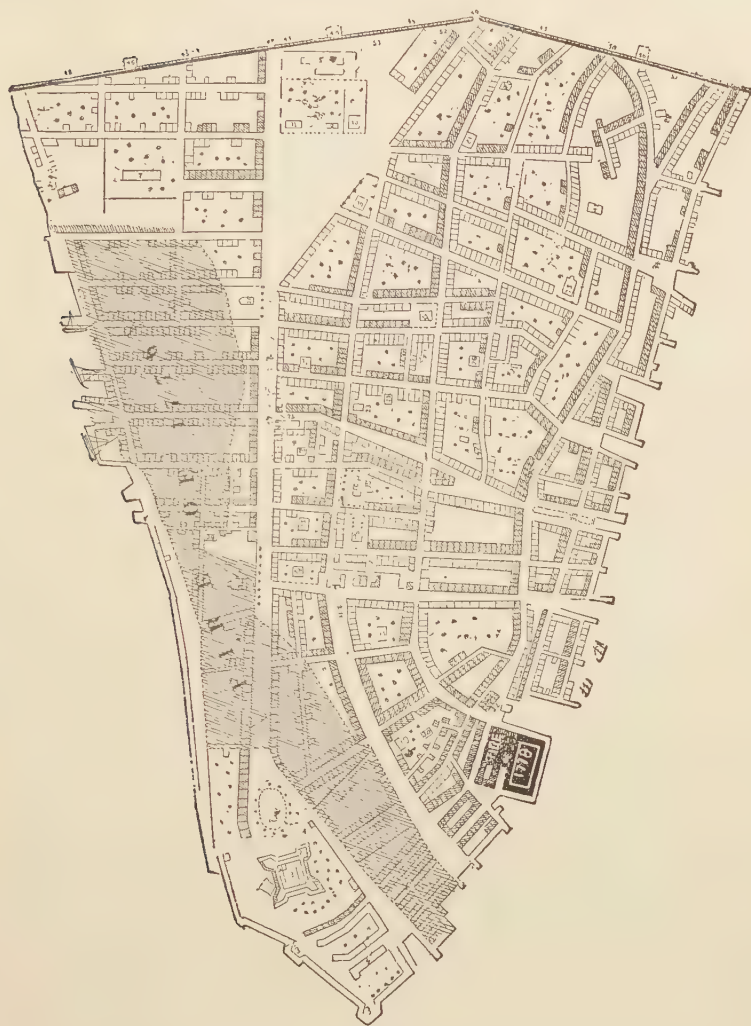
Although New York's fire-fighting forces were practically non-existent at the close of the Revolution, during the period of British occupancy several prominent citizens had succeeded in inaugurating a movement which was destined to develop in later years into an important adjunct of the department. On November 1, 1780, they organized the Hand-in-Hand Fire Company,⁵ the members of which confined their efforts to saving property, and were exempt from the obligations theoretically imposed upon all others of handling buckets or assisting at the engines. A few months later, in January, 1781, the Friendly Union and the Heart-in-Hand Fire Companies joined the salvage forces, and were soon followed by others. The last organization of this particular type was the Mutual Assistance Bag Company, which was formed in 1803. Its membership included representatives of such well-known New York families as Beekman, Bleecker, DePeyster, Ten Eyck, Laight, Morris, Roosevelt and Vandevoot. The rules of all the companies were virtually identical. They required each member to provide himself with two large bags of raven's duck, each containing not less than three yards, with proper draw strings, and marked with the initials of the company and his own name in full. He also wore a round hat with a black brim and a white crown, on which his company initials were painted in black. Upon an alarm of fire "each member shall repair with his bags, and hat on, to the house or store most in danger belonging to any of the company, and endeavor to the utmost of his power to save their effects by carefully conveying them to some convenient and proper place, to prevent the embezzlement of the same."⁶ A sentinel was posted before the building from which property was to be

carried, and no one was permitted to enter until he had given the password, which was frequently changed. These organizations were the forerunners of the present Fire Patrol, maintained by the insurance underwriters, which rolls to fires with the regular firemen and covers destructible goods with heavy tarpaulins to protect them from both fire and water. In its present form the Patrol was organized in 1839, after a fire in Smith's Tea Warehouse in Water Street, between Dover and Roosevelt Streets, in which the insurance companies lost heavily.

3

THE most disastrous conflagration in the history of New York, with the exception of the Great Fire of 1835, occurred soon after Major Jacobus Stoughtenburg had marched the firemen out of the city in 1776. According to Hugh Gainé's *Universal Register* the metropolis then had a population of about thirty thousand and contained four thousand two hundred houses. The fire started in the Fighting Cocks, a low tavern and brothel on the wharf near Whitehall Slip, between one and two o'clock in the morning of September 21, 1776, a few hours before Nathan Hale was captured and brought into the city by a British patrol.⁷ A strong wind was blowing from the southwest, and the flames swept rapidly up Beaver and Broad Streets to Broadway and thence northward, destroying all that portion of the city which lay along the Hudson River. The fire was only checked by the spacious grounds of King's College, later Columbia University, at Mortkile Street, now Barclay. The college buildings caught fire several times, but were saved after much hard and dangerous work. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where George Washington frequently worshipped after he became President, was also endangered, but fortunately the roof was flat, with a low balustrade along the eaves. Citizens carrying buckets of water clambered to the roof and lined the balus-

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Portions of City Destroyed by Fires of 1776 and 1778

trade, extinguishing the sparks as rapidly as they fell upon the shingles.

The demoralized citizenry, unfamiliar with the fire engines and beset by a multitude of difficulties, were wholly unable to cope with the conflagration, and the fire raged for several days, burning all the buildings on each side of Beaver Street to Bowling Green, and on both sides of Broadway as far north as Exchange Place. On the west side of Broadway the flames continued beyond Exchange Place, destroying most of the houses from Morris Street to Partition Street, now Fulton, and burning Trinity Church, the rectory, the two buildings of the Charity School, and the Lutheran Church. A total of four hundred and ninety-three buildings were destroyed, and although the property loss has never been officially estimated, it was probably between seven and ten million dollars. The loss to Trinity Church was about one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, the organ alone being valued at more than four thousand dollars. After the fire had burned itself out homeless men and women converted the ruins on the southeast side of the town into dwelling places, using the chimneys and walls which remained standing and adding pieces of spars and old sails which were obtained from the ships in the harbor. This district was called Canvas Town, and there the worst of the Tory and Army refugees eked out a miserable existence.

Although both General Washington and the Continental Congress had rejected General Greene's proposal to burn New York rather than permit it to fall into the hands of the enemy, there appears to be substantial ground for believing that the fire was of incendiary origin. Many of the fire engines were found to have been damaged when citizens rushed to man them, and hundreds of fire buckets had been cut. According to the newspapers of the period, the British troops arrested about two hundred men on suspicion, and hanged several, among them a carpenter named

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White, for carrying matches and tampering with the fire apparatus. Another man was executed for attempting to set fire to the college buildings. In his history of the Revolu-



Trinity Church before the Fire of 1776

tion Steadman says that after the fire “a great many cart-loads of pine sticks, dipped in brimstone, were found concealed in houses which the incendiaries had not had time to set afire.” The Rev. Charles Inglis, rector of Trinity Church,

wrote to a friend in England that "several rebels had secreted themselves within the houses to execute the diabolical purpose of destroying the city. They carried off all the bells, partly to convert them into cannon, and partly to prevent notice being speedily given of the destruction they meditated against the city by fire when it began." After the conflagration this proclamation was issued by Major-General James Robertson, the British Governor of conquered New York:

Whereas, There is ground to believe that the Rebels, not satisfied with the destruction of Part of the city, entertain Designs of Burning the Rest. And it is thought that a Watch to inspect all the Parts of the City to apprehend Incendiaries and to stifle Fires before they rise to a dangerous Height might be a necessary and proper means to prevent such a calamity. Many of the principal inhabitants have applied to me to form such a Watch, and have offered to watch in person.

Patriotic American writers have, as a rule, refused to believe that the fire was the result of a deliberate attempt to destroy the city. They point triumphantly to the fact that the British were unable to obtain conclusive evidence of a plot, and that they eventually released all the men who had been arrested during the conflagration, excepting, of course, those who had been hanged. In her monumental history of New York, Martha J. Lamb suggests that the fire started from a blaze carelessly kindled on the hearth at the Fighting Cocks by drunken sailors and prostitutes. *Lossing's Pictorial Field-Book of the American Revolution* says that "the Tory and British writers of the day attempted to fix the crime of incendiarism on the Whigs, but could not. It is well known that the fire had an accidental origin, yet British historians continue to reproduce the libel." There remains the incontrovertible fact, however, that while the Fighting Cocks was burning, half a dozen other fires appeared simultaneously in different parts of downtown New York.

Two years after the fire of 1776, on August 3, 1778, another serious conflagration started in the store of a ship chandler named Jones, on Cruger's Wharf, and destroyed sixty-four dwellings, half a dozen stores, and two small vessels. On December 9, 1796, occurred the Coffee House Slip Fire, which began in the store of Robinson & Harts-horne on Murray Wharf, now the eastern end of Wall Street, and spread to Maiden Lane, burning all the buildings below Front Street from Cruger's Wharf to the Fly Market. Half a dozen other fires were reported during the next few days, and New York was thrown into great excitement by a rumor that the Negroes had again conspired to destroy the city. Said the *New York Minerva*,^s edited by Noah Webster, on December 14th:

Serious Cause of Alarm:—Citizens of New York, you are once more called upon to attend to your duty. It is no longer a doubt, it is a fact, that there is a combination of incendiaries in this city aiming to wrap the whole of it in flames! The house of Mr. Lewis Ogden, in Pearl Street, has been twice set on fire—the evidence of malicious intent is indubitable—and he has sent his *black man*, suspected, to prison. Last night an attempt was made to set fire to Mr. Lindsay's house in Greenwich Street. The combustibles left for the purpose are preserved as evidence of the fact. Another attempt, we learn, was made last night in Beekman Street. A bed was set on fire under a child, and his cries alarmed his family. Rouse, fellow-citizens and magistrates! Your lives and property are at stake! Double your night-watch and confine your servants!

The next afternoon the Common Council offered five hundred dollars reward for the arrest and conviction of the incendiaries, and urged all good citizens to form themselves into companies "to consist of such numbers as

shall be necessary for the purpose of keeping a watch for the safety of the city." This was done in a few wards, and the precautions, if any were needed, were effective. No more fires occurred, and the excitement soon subsided.

The year in which Noah Webster became so editorially upset is also notable in New York history for the construction of the first State Prison in the village of Greenwich, which had arisen on the site of the ancient Indian town of Sappokanican.⁹ The buildings and grounds occupied about four acres of land, approximately the area now bounded by Christopher, Washington, Perry, Charles, and West Streets. The institution was opened on November 28th, 1796, when the *Daily Advertiser* announced that seventy prisoners had been admitted. The first convict to enter its doors is said to have been Noah Gardner, owner of a large shoe factory in Maiden Lane, who had been found guilty of forgery, at that time a capital offense. He was reprieved while standing on the gallows, and the Society of Friends, of which he was a member, induced the Governor to commute his sentence to life imprisonment. Gardner was made foreman of the prison shoe-shop, but after a few months the manufacturers and dealers of New York complained to the Legislature that the state would soon be overflowing with convict-made shoes and their means of livelihood destroyed. The law-makers thereupon set the prisoners to making brooms and mousetraps. Gardner superintended the making of these articles also for seven years, when the Friends obtained an unconditional pardon for him and set him up in business, buying and stocking a store in Pearl Street, near Peck Slip, and lending him a large amount of money. For a few years Gardner prospered. Then he borrowed several thousand dollars, persuaded half a dozen Friends to sign his notes, and departed for parts unknown, accompanied by the young daughter of one of the

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most prominent members of the Society. His own wife and children were left destitute.

During the first ten years after the opening of the prison it seldom housed fewer than two hundred and fifty convicts, many of whom were employed by the city in road and sewer construction and, as we have seen, to fill the various cisterns for the use of the fire engines. In summer the prisoners wore brown striped jackets and trousers made of linen. If a man was sentenced to prison for the second time, the right side of his coat and the left side of his trousers were black. A third offender wore a large figure 3 on his back, and received coarser food than the others. None of the convicts, however, were over-fed, as these sample menus will show :

Dinner for 225 men in July, 1800.

<i>Seventeen ox hearts</i>	<i>\$1.63</i>
<i>Seven ox heads</i>	<i>\$1.09</i>
<i>Six lamb plucks</i>	<i>.19</i>
<i>One peck of potatoes</i>	<i>.15</i>
<i>Three pounds of Indian meal</i>	<i>.04½</i>
<i>One-fourth pound of pepper</i>	<i>.10½</i>
<i>Fuel and herbs</i>	<i>.24</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$3.45</i>

Breakfast for 235 men in August, 1800.

<i>One peck of rye</i>	<i>\$.25</i>
<i>Six and one-half quarts of molasses</i>	<i>1.02</i>
<i>One hundred and thirty pounds of bread</i>	<i>1.95</i>
<i>Fuel used in cooking</i>	<i>.08</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$3.30</i>

Supper for 218 convicts in August, 1800.

<i>Thirty-six and one-half pounds Indian meal, for mush</i>	<i>\$.54</i>
<i>One and one-half pounds of salt</i>	<i>.03</i>
<i>Sixty-one pounds of bread</i>	<i>.91</i>
<i>Two gallons, three quarts and seven gills of molasses</i>	<i>1.79</i>
<i>Fuel</i>	<i>.08</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$3.35</i>

The convicts incarcerated in this early bastille appear to have a pronounced distaste for their surroundings, and attempts to escape were even more numerous than from modern penal institutions. The first on record was made by the men employed in the shoe shop, known as Mechanics' Hall, on June 13, 1799. They overpowered their guards, but before they could scale the walls they were fired upon by other guards, who wounded several and drove the remainder back to their cells. Seven escaped at night about a year later during a storm, and in 1803 forty or fifty men revolted, tied up the keepers and made their way into the prison yard. "They attempted to get over the wall," reported the *Evening Post*, "by placing board and other material together, something in the form of a scaffold; and to create a greater confusion, they set the prison on fire. However, the sentry observed them in time to give the alarm; the bell was rung, the guards assembled, and the prisoners persisting were fired upon, when several were killed and badly wounded, before they would retire in their cells. The fire was in the meantime put out by the keepers." The next year the convicts succeeded in burning the north wing of the main building, having first locked up the keepers. A score or more escaped before the military reached the scene. Similar troubles occurred with great regularity until 1828, when the state began to transfer the convicts to the new state prison, Sing Sing, on the Hudson River near the town of Ossining. The transfer was completed during the spring of 1829, and in May of that year the old prison was sold and turned into commercial uses. Part of the wall was later built into a brewery.

ORGANIZATION

I

THE ORGANIZATION of the New York Fire Department had been woven into a fairly definite pattern by the beginning of the nineteenth century, and remained without important changes until the growth of the city and the introduction of steam engines compelled the formation



Ye Olde Battery Park

of a paid force in 1865. The principal officer of the old volunteers was the Chief Engineer, who received a yearly salary ranging from eight hundred dollars in 1819 to five thousand dollars in 1857 and thereafter. During the first half-century

of the Republic the Chief Engineer was chosen by the Common Council, but in later times, after 1836, he was nominated by the Board of Foremen and Assistant Foremen of the companies and confirmed by the Council, holding office during the pleasure of the latter body. Still later, beginning in 1853, he was elected by the firemen every three years. The Chief Engineer was compelled to bow to the will of the politicians in such matters as locating engines and fire-houses, but once a fire started he was in supreme command. Not even the Mayor, an industrious and omnipresent official in those days, could give him orders. So long as he displayed personal courage, and ability to handle and dispose the apparatus, the Chief Engineer could depend upon the unswerving loyalty and devotion of the rank and file of the department. Sometimes, indeed, their feeling verged upon adoration, and they were invariably quick to resent any insult or criticism, real or fancied, which they thought had been directed against their beloved leader.

A fire company was usually organized by citizens who desired greater protection for their particular district, or simply because they enjoyed running with the engines, the hose carts, or the hook and ladder trucks. Once formed, a company elected new members as required, each choice being subject to the approval of the Chief Engineer and the Common Council, which presented the successful candidate with a handsomely embellished certificate of appointment. The term of service was ten years in 1816, but in 1847 it was reduced to five years, although a fireman might resign at any time, and was also liable to expulsion or suspension for various offenses. Some of the companies taxed themselves to provide sleeping quarters, either above the engine-room or nearby, where the members bunked over week-ends and at other convenient times. Firemen received no pay, and the allowances granted by the city for the maintenance of

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houses and apparatus were so infrequent and inadequate that they were often compelled to pay for repairs or new materials out of their own pockets. But after serving a prescribed length of time, which varied in different periods, they were exempt from jury or military duties. The latter



Firemen at Work, 1800

exemption was considered an especial benefit, and was much sought after, for in the early days of New York every able-bodied man was obliged to enlist in the militia, and to drill for three consecutive days a year. A fireman was expected to stop whatever he was doing, whether work or play, and hasten to a conflagration, and if he failed to follow his apparatus, or violated any of the innumerable rules and regulations, he was heavily fined. In most of the companies the penalties were approximately the same as in this schedule adopted in 1823 by Clinton Engine Company No. 41:

<i>Foremen and assistant foremen, for neglecting to impartially enforce all laws that shall be adopted by the company</i>	<i>\$1.00</i>
<i>For the treasurer neglecting to render a true statement of the funds when requested by the foreman or assistant</i>	<i>1.00</i>
<i>For a member neglecting to repair after engine to fire when alarm has sounded and engine gone</i>	<i>.75</i>

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

<i>For going direct from home without his fire-cap</i>	<i>\$.25</i>
<i>For not coming to order when called by the chair</i>	<i>.25</i>
<i>Absence from regular or special meeting</i>	<i>.50</i>
<i>Not answering to name at roll-call</i>	<i>.12¹/₂</i>
<i>Quitting meeting without leave of chairman</i>	<i>.50</i>
<i>Introducing politics at meeting, improper behavior, using indecent language, profane swearing, or being intoxicated at any meeting of the company</i>	<i>1.00</i>
<i>Shoving at engine, instead of dragging at rope</i>	<i>.25</i>
<i>Failing to report chimney on fire within forty-eight hours of knowledge of fact</i>	<i>1.00</i>



First Insurance Patrol

Some of the companies imposed very heavy penalties, occasionally as much as ten dollars, for non-attendance at fires. But this particular fine was seldom collected, for noth-

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ing short of an act of God could prevent the old volunteer from risking his neck fighting the flames. The records of the department are replete with the stories of men who left sick-beds to follow the engines, and of others who abandoned their prospective brides at the altars to answer alarms. Sometimes they joined their fellows at the drag-rope only after considerable difficulty, as witness the experience of James Weir, Foreman of Engine Company No. 21. On the night of December 31, 1856, Weir was attending Watch-Night services in the old Negro Church at Leonard and Church Streets, when the City Hall bell rang an alarm. Weir promptly leaped to his feet and rushed for the door, which was guarded by a gigantic Negro Deacon. When he saw Weir racing down the aisle, the Deacon raised his eyes piously to Heaven and cried:

"Lord, forgive me for what I am about to do, and may Thy name be ever praised!"

His enormous fist shot out and thudded against Weir's left eye, knocking the foreman over two benches into the lap of a praying old woman. But Weir was a true fireman. Instead of returning the blow, he dodged under the Deacon's flailing arms and hurried to his engine house. Two weeks later, still nursing a black eye, he encountered the Negro on the street and gave him a thorough beating.

By means of the fines, and the often invoked threat of suspension and expulsion, the firemen maintained discipline within their ranks. Most of the companies forbade smoking and chewing, as well as intoxication and swearing, the usual fine being one dollar. In 1810 a member of Engine Company No. 13 was fined for saying "damn the odds," and another, W. A. Baker, was similarly punished for saying to John E. Norris, "You be damned, you damned old Dutch hog!" Such entries as these from the minutes of Engine Company No. 13 frequently appear in the old records:

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

Dec. 1, 1829 — *Charles J. Hubbs reports D. T. Williams for chewing tobacco in the engine house.*

Dec. 3, 1829 — *William M. Haydock reports Washington Van Wyck for smoking in the engine house*

Dec. 18, 1829 — *Edward Franklin reports P. L. Tonnele for chewing tobacco in the engine house.*

Jan. 16, 1830 — *Edward Franklin reports Robert S. Barnes, & I. N. Mott reports William Jagger & Stephen D. Thorne for smoking in the engine house. William Corp reports D. T. Williams for using a lighted segar in the engine house.*

Feb. 8, 1830 — *D. T. Williams reports Robert S. Barnes, smoking in the engine house; Robert S. Barnes reports W. Titus for the same offense, and I. S. Leggett for chewing in the engine house.*

Feb. 10, 1830 — *Mr. Tonnele was fined twice for swearing and once for smoking.*

Tonnele appears to have objected strenuously and effectively, for at the same meeting at which he was thrice fined "the Law relative to smoking & chewing in the Engine House was repealed." Many of the other companies soon did likewise, but others retained the regulations for many years. As late as March 10, 1860, according to the minutes of Engine Company No. 5, "John F. Horan was fined twenty-five cents for smoking in meeting."

The indiscriminate and frequent imposition of penalties provoked a flood of explanation and excuse, some of which sounds exceedingly naïve to our modern ears. On March 13, 1798, John Lent of Engine Company No. 13 was absent from a fire "because his child had sore ears," but he was expelled from the organization, probably because he added that he "preferred paying the fine to going." On July 6, 1807, Joseph Giraud's fellow firemen turned a deaf ear to his explanation that he had not attended a conflagration "because of a severe pain in the face and the necessity of having a Jaw Tooth Extracted." On November 10, 1806, "John Vanderbilt gave as his Excuse for non-attendance at the Alarm of Fire last night that he was Engaged in the Masonic Lodge, but says he heard

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the Alarm — further the deponent sayeth not." None of the recorded explanations however, reached the height of frankness attained by that offered by Harris Sage of Engine Company No. 13. It is thus noted in the minutes :

Jan. 15, 1807 — *Harris Sage's Excuse is received. He says at the time of the Fire he was lock'd in Some One's Arms & could not hear the Alarm.*

It is distressing to record that Mr. Sage's explanation was not accepted.

2

ATTACHED to each engine, hose, and hook and ladder company was an aggregation of young men and boys variously called runners and voluntary aids, but more often the former, who had been unable to join the company because of their youth, or because the rolls were filled, or for other reasons. They aped the firemen in dress and deportment and followed the engines with dog-like devotion. Sometimes they outnumbered the regular members, and in early days were regularly organized, with foremen and other officers. They imposed fines for non-performance of duty, called the roll after fires, and occasionally wore distinguishing head-gear. The runners of Black Joe Engine Company No. 33, for example, wore hats made of tarpaulin, with long black ribbons decorated with the figures 33 in gilt. The runners ran ahead of the apparatus and carried the signal lanterns, and occasionally were permitted to assist at fires, but in general their duties consisted in carrying water, building fires, and performing other menial tasks around the fire-houses. They were very proud of their connection with the companies, and often taxed themselves to pay for gifts to their idols. Such an enterprise always necessitated considerable dignified correspondence, and the presentation was invariably an occasion of great formality. In 1823, when an engine company

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

received a new signal lantern from its runners, it was accompanied by this elegant epistle:

New York, February 6, 1823.

Sir, — The Volunteers attached to the Fulton Fire Company No. 21, deeming it expedient to have a new lantern, have procured one, and do hereby present it through you to the members of said company, hoping that it will prove acceptable to them.

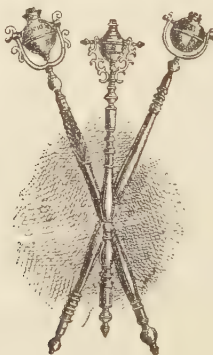
That it may be seen foremost on all occasions when the voice of their fellow-citizens shall call on them for that gratuitous assistance which they have ever been ready and willing to grant, shall be our constant desire; and we feel a pleasure in assuring them that our exertions, however feeble they may be, shall always tend to the promotion of so desirable and praiseworthy an object.

In behalf of the Volunteers,

Alfred Wardell, Secretary.

To Mr. J. A. Mitchell, Foreman, No. 21.

Another company received an “elegant pair of torches, presented to us by the volunteers as a token of their good wishes and friendship,” and a third adopted resolutions



Signal Light

thanking the runners for “a beautiful set of brass bands calculated for the hubbs of the engine.” In return for these

valuable gifts, the firemen sometimes invited the runners to banquets, and provided funds for their annual dinners. In 1815 the clerk of Engine Company No. 5 was directed "to present to the voluntary aids attached to this company one dollar each for the purpose of procuring an annual feast," and in 1823 the same company raised a fund of twenty-five dollars "to defray the amount of a bill of clothes presented to a volunteer."

Many famous and efficient firemen were originally runners, but in the course of time the ranks of the voluntary organizations became filled with rowdies and hoodlums, and often with criminals, who gloried in the excitement of the fires and their right to enter the fire-lines. Among them, during the final years of the volunteer department, could always be found members of such famous gangs as the Dead Rabbits, the Bowery B'hoys, the Forty Thieves, the Chichesters, the Old Maid Boys, the Short Boys, and others which haunted the Bowery and the old Five Points district. They caused much trouble and brought great disrepute upon the active firemen by their constant fighting and bickering. As early as 1824 the Common Council declared that "disorder and confusion are introduced into the Fire Department by admitting volunteers to assist in the various fire companies, and to assume the dress and authority of firemen." In 1841 Chief Engineer Anderson, in his annual report to the Council, said that "the practice of boys frequenting the engine houses is becoming an evil of great magnitude." Chief Engineer Alfred Carson, in 1855, complained that "the miscreants who have been removed from the fire companies unite with the runners and create disturbances." Conditions among the voluntary aids became steadily worse, and in 1865 the Board of Fire Commissioners, which had been formed in 1854, abolished all such organizations, whereupon an anonymous poet celebrated the departed glories of the runner in a poem called "The

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

Runner's Lament," which was very popular for several years:

*I was a jolly runner bold,
When runners were all hunk;
I ran to fires, I fought, I swore,
And occupied a bunk.
Owl-like, I slept most all the day
And kept awake at night,
With joy I heard the clanging bells
And saw the rising light.
My blood went tingling through my veins,
My heart throbbed with desire,
Whene'er I heard the welcome cry,
"Turn out, boys! Fire! Fire! Fire!"
Quick — man the ropes — the rushing tramp,
The rattling wheels — the crowd —
The hose-cart bells — the trumpet shout —
The Hall bell, deep and loud!*

*Hail! bully boys, first at the fire,
Run out the leathern hose;
Quick, Syksey, now, and take the butt,
Turn on the water, Mose;
The massive ladders raise aloft,
And man them, hearts of oak.
Now wield the hook and swing the axe,
With well-directed stroke.*

*And when the fire was mostly quenched
And smoke obscured the stars,
Some trump with open heart would treat
To lager and cigars!
Then into Carter's, or Udell's,
We rushed amid hi! hi's!
To get our coffee, smoking hot,
And butter-cakes and pies.
Those were the joys I used to share
(On which I love to dwell)
Until that surly order came
That rung the runners' knell.*

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*Those chums that used to ask me drink,
Now give me the pass-by;
I know not what to do or think,
Unless it be — to die.*

*I tell ye, Fire Commissioners!
Your arbitrary sway
Has robbed the Fire Department
Of its glory and mainstay.
Though now you swell with pomp and pride,
In all your great renown,
Your power, like Riley's Pole,¹ will rot,
And the boys will take you down.*

3

FOR more than two hundred years after the original Dutch settlers landed on Manhattan Island an alarm of fire was given by the ringing of the bells in the churches, the watch-houses, and the markets, and by the night watchmen, who raced through the streets pounding on doors and arousing the citizens. When the present City Hall was completed in 1812 at a cost of \$437,734, a large bell was installed in the cupola, and it became the principal alarm station of the city. After April 1, 1835, by order of the Common Council, a watchman was constantly on duty there, and was required to indicate the direction of a conflagration by ringing the bell in a prescribed manner, and by hanging out a lantern on a pole. If the fire occurred during the daytime, a flag was displayed. Within a few more years the growth of the city necessitated the establishment of additional permanent stations, and watchmen were stationed in the cupolas of the Reservoir, Centre, Jefferson and Essex Markets, and the Halls of Justice, which was the official name of the Tombs Prison. The bell ringers received one dollar and seventy-five cents a day, and were chosen from the regular watch force until 1844, when the Municipal Police Department was organized and the watchmen were legislated out of

office. Thereafter the jobs were filled by crippled and exempt firemen, who were paid six hundred dollars a year. In 1864 this sum was increased to one thousand dollars. Every bell in the city was supposed to ring whenever a fire was discovered, and there was much dissatisfaction at various times because the sextons of the churches neglected their duties. But when complaint was made to the Common Council the city authorities were compelled to reply that "they had no power over church bells."

With various improvements and extensions, this system of bells and watch-stations, though never very satisfactory, sufficed until the improvement of the telegraph made possible the installation of a method of giving the alarm from which developed the present system, whereby an alarm turned in at a corner box is registered immediately in all the fire-houses of a particular district. The use of telegraphic communication as a part of the fire alarm system began in New York in 1847, when, upon recommendation of Chief Engineer Cornelius V. Anderson, the Common Council enacted an ordinance granting permission to Hugh Downing and Royal E. House "to construct a line of telegraph by setting posts in the ground" from Fort Washington through various streets to several of the bell towers, "provided that Downing and House shall put up the necessary wire and apparatus, and keep the same in order, and give the free and perpetual use of the invention for communicating alarms of fire from the City Hall to the different stations, and instruct the different bell-ringers in the use of the said invention." For their labor, wire, apparatus, and the use of the telegraph, Messrs. Downing and House were paid the magnificent sum of five hundred dollars.

UNIFORMS AND LIQUOR KEGS

I

THE COSTUME of the early New York fireman was invariably the gaudiest raiment in his possession, and during the brave days of the volunteer department both men and machines presented startling spectacles whenever they participated in the parades with which the citizens of the period celebrated events of great importance, and, indeed, of no importance at all. But in yielding to the impulse for sartorial embellishment the firemen only followed the example set by their elected and appointed superiors, for when the metropolis was a municipal infant its officials were arrayed like the lilies of the field. The Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Assistant Aldermen commonly sallied forth upon official business wearing glistening top hats and bearing gayly decorated staves; and the executive head of the city, as we have seen, was required to attend all fires carrying a snow-white wand surmounted by a gilded flame. And until the Civil War, and occasionally for some years thereafter, the Sheriff and his deputies stalked solemnly about the streets wearing frock coats buttoned to the chin, with tall staves in their hands and enormous plug hats crowning their soaped and shining hair. The Sheriff was distinguished from his satraps by the greater height and lustre of his hat, and by a huge sword that rattled and clanked at his heels, and was diabolically inspired to trip him on the most impressive occasions.

The fireman was no whit deterred from wearing his gorgeous garments by the fact that he regularly returned from a conflagration in a sadly grimy and bedraggled condition. For not only was he exposed to the ordinary hazards of a fire, with its accompanying smoke and dirt, but he was almost certain to be wetted by his engine, which nearly always leaked at the seams, or by the crude hose that frequently burst and spouted in all directions, throwing more water upon the firemen than upon the flames. But despite the practical certainty that his clothing would be soiled, the New York fire laddie of 1820 was devotedly attached to a uniform consisting of a white duck suit and a black leather belt, and considered himself disgraced if he was compelled to respond to an alarm without these handsome accessories. Even if he chanced to be within a few feet of a blaze when it started, he would have nothing to do with it until he had hurried to his engine house and donned proper fire-fighting attire.

About ten years later some of the companies adopted coats of heavy drab kersey cloth, with large side pockets and enormous white bone buttons. Trousers were of the same material, with "waistbands made to button quick." As an additional touch to this costume, the fireman wore a russet or black harness-leather belt. He also possessed a red woolen night-cap, which he carried in his pocket and wore instead of his regular hat while working at the brakes of his engine. The members of Excelsior Engine Company No. 2, successor to the old Chatham Company which had operated one of the first engines imported from London in 1731, were among the first to use this uniform, and were noted for the gigantic size of their side-pockets and the prodigiousness of their white buttons. These natty firemen also carried canes when responding to an alarm, tucking them under their arms while hauling on the drag-rope, and stacking them in a neat pile before they began to labor at

UNIFORMS AND LIQUOR KEGS

the brakes. The company was popularly known as "Quaker Two," because most of its members were young men of Quaker families in Henry and adjacent streets.

The red flannel or woolen shirt which was destined to become the great distinguishing mark of the New York fireman, and to remain so until it was supplanted by the present blue garment many years after the Civil War, was first worn by the men of Protection Engine Company No. 5, which was popularly known as Old Honey Bee. For more than twenty years they were considered the fastest firemen in the city. Their admirers proudly boasted that they could throw their boots from an upper window of the engine house and be down themselves before the foot-gear had struck the sidewalk. These accomplished smoke-eaters aroused a buzz



A Fire Laddie of 1840

of jealous comment during the early summer of 1840 by dashing to a fire clad in their new flaming red shirts, and the other companies adopted the garb as rapidly as they could raise money to purchase supplies. Ten years after its introduction a common fire-fighting costume was a red shirt, a pair of blue-black trousers, a patent-leather belt, and a blue

pilot-cloth coat. In mild weather, and throughout the summer months, the firemen went coatless, and the blinding glory of the red shirt was enhanced by a pair of fancy suspenders, or gallowses, as they were then called, which were in every way extraordinary. They were very wide, and of all conceivable color combinations. At the back they were fastened together by a leathern clasp or shield decorated with a double-headed eagle, and the buckles in front were likewise carved or ornamented. On the body of the eagle was printed in bright colors the number of the engine or hose cart, while the two beaks of the eagle held a ribbon on which was lettered the name of the company. For many years the gallowses were extremely popular, but the custom of wearing them fell into disuse after they had been adopted by the runners, and by others who had no connection whatever with the department. Some were fairly expensive, a pair worn by a member of the Brokaw family in 1850 costing seventeen dollars.

The volunteer firemen vigorously resented every attempt to regulate and standardize their clothing, but they were content to wear any sort of hat or cap suggested by the city authorities. The leathern fire-cap was invented by about 1740 by Jacobus Turck, a gunsmith and then Overseer of Fire Engines. Turck's cap was round, with a high crown and a narrow brim, but as the years rolled by various improvements were made in its construction until the modern fire helmet was developed. Soon after the beginning of the nineteenth century a law was enacted requiring privates in the department to wear black caps with black fronts lettered in white, while the minor officers wore black caps with white fronts lettered in black. The Chief Engineer and the Assistant Engineers, whose duties were in general similar to those of the modern Chief and Battalion Chiefs, covered their heads with white caps, on which were gilded fronts decorated by pictures of fire engines. They also carried black

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speaking trumpets. The Fire Wardens, who enforced the fire prevention laws and investigated charges of incendiarism, wore white caps on which the city arms had been painted, and carried white trumpets. Badges of different sorts, specially designed by each company, were in use until 1855, when a uniform insignia was adopted. It was shaped like a shield, and lettered with words "N. Y. Fire Department" and the number of the firemen on the city rolls. This, in turn, gave way in 1860 to badges of different shapes and designs for engine, hose, and hook and ladder companies.



Old Fire Hats

The earliest fire-cap maker to achieve renown in New York was Matthew Du Bois, who kept a shop in Anthony Street, now Worth. He was the first to manufacture caps with iron rims inside the brims, so that the heat could not warp them. A later manufacturer, named Baudouine, operated a factory at Chatham (now Park Row) and Pearl Streets, but he is chiefly remembered for having won a prize of twenty-five thousand dollars in a lottery. The most famous hat he ever made weighed two and three-quarter pounds, and was worn by Valentine Vandewater, an

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

Assistant Engineer during the eighteen twenties, who was six feet and four inches tall. Head-gear for the use of the firemen was also manufactured, during the first half of the nineteenth century, by Robert Roberts, in Division Street, and John Wilson, at Grand Street and the Bowery.



Old Fire Hats

But the greatest of all fire-cap makers was a genius who bore the appropriate name of Henry T. Gratacap. He was responsible for many of the improvements which led to the

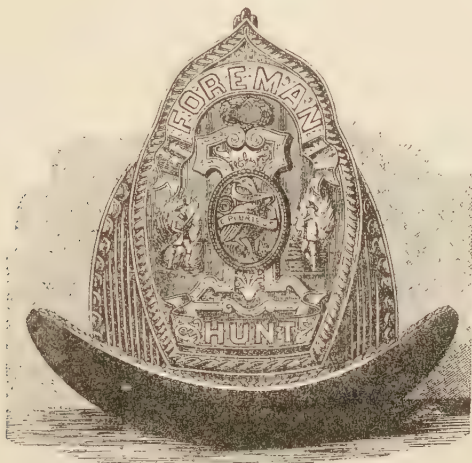


Foreman Gratacap's Hat

development of the helmet now in use. He was himself a noted fireman, and as a member of Columbian Engine Company No. 14 ran to many conflagrations. He was Foreman of the company at the burning of the Crystal Palace, on the present site of Bryant Park, then called Reservoir Square,

on October 5, 1858.¹ His own cap was lost during the fire, but was saved by another member of the company.

Gratacap began to make fire-caps in 1828, as an apprentice in the shop of William Hinton, in Broadway near Dey Street, and in 1836 opened his own factory at No. 392 Broadway. There he manufactured caps for fourteen years. Then he removed to No. 143 Grand Street, retiring sixteen years later and selling his business to Cairnes & Brother. For at least thirty years Gratacap made most of the fire-caps used in New York and other Eastern cities, sometimes



A \$2,200 Fire Hat

producing more than a hundred a week. He is said to have been the first manufacturer to extend the brim to the rear, although for some forty years after the Revolution similar head coverings, with brims that jutted out more than a foot, had been worn by the city's Watchmen to keep the rain from pouring down the back of their necks. These hats were made of leather, were almost unbreakable, and were varnished twice a year by order of the Common Council. They gave the early New York Policeman his sobriquet of Leatherhead.²

Prices of the Gratacap caps ranged from a few dollars to a hundred, but he was frequently commissioned to make an especially elaborate piece of head-gear, for which he charged accordingly. He turned out many that cost as much as five hundred dollars each, and a few so ornate that nothing less than a thousand dollar bill would pay for them. But the most expensive fire-hat ever manufactured in the Gratacap plant, and probably in the United States, was made on order for the volunteer firemen of Sacramento, California, who presented it to Foreman Hunt of that city in recognition of his valorous deeds. Gratacap's bill was one thousand, three hundred and fifty dollars, and the fashionable jewelry firm of Ball & Black charged eight hundred and fifty dollars for mounting it in gold and silver. Large presentation fronts, very elaborate and distinguished, and costing from ten dollars to one hundred dollars, were often given by one company to another, and by citizens to firemen who had saved their lives and property. This custom was retained for



Presentation Front

many years after the organization of the paid department. Probably the finest of these fronts was that presented to Rambler Hose Company of Blissville, Long Island, now a part of Long Island City, by Mechanics Hose Company No. 47, of New York, on August 20, 1881.

BLESSED with good health and a tremendous appetite, the old-time volunteer fireman was as eager to embellish his interior with good food and drink as he was to adorn his exterior with fine and gaudy raiment. Chowder was the national soup during the palmy days of the Fire Department, and around this delectable concoction revolved the whole social life of the engine and hose companies. And in those times chowder was more to be eaten than drunk, for it was not the anæmic liquid which now sloshes so despairingly in restaurant bowls, but a thick and substantial mixture, compounded of eels, fish, clams, lobster, chicken, duck, and all sorts of tempting ingredients.³ No social function was complete without a great dish of chowder, and the firemen customarily regaled themselves and their friends at chowder parties every Saturday night, and on as many other nights as they could afford. In the main these feasts of reasons and flows of soul were for gentlemen only, but quite often ladies were also invited, and dainty viands were provided for their delicate palates. Oceana Hose Company No. 36, and Amity Hose Company No. 38, were especially famous for their entertainments. The latter gave an annual "Amity Hop" at the Apollo Rooms in Broadway near Canal Street, which was attended by the flower and chivalry of the Department; but Oceana's social affairs were always held in the company house. They were always very *recherche*, and the behavior of the guests was extremely formal and elegant. The *New York Herald* thus described a dance given by Oceana Hose on December 8, 1852:

On approaching the house we found the streets lined on both sides, for about a block, with carriages, and imagined for a moment we had dropped down in the region of Upper Tendom, instead of the house of a fire company.

The house was fitted up throughout in a style not surpassed, if equalled, by any other of a similar kind in the city. The walls were tastefully decorated with appropriate engravings, and in the back part of the room was the book-case, well-filled with a collection of useful and entertaining books. The drawing room was fitted up in a style truly magnificent, and would vie with those of some of our merchant princes in Fifth Avenue and elsewhere. The carpet upon the floor was of Brussels tapestry, and the windows were hung with damask and lace inside curtains. In fact, everything in and about the house was arranged in a style of splendor and convenience such as we have never seen equalled by any company in the Department, and we understand it has been done entirely at the expense of the members themselves, the whole cost being about one thousand two hundred dollars. We could add much more in regard to this, but for want of space must pass on to the entertainment. During our stay the house was crowded with ladies and gentlemen, all seemingly much pleased with the hospitable and generous manner in which they were received by the members of the Oceana; and we must say we never saw congregated together on any occasion a greater array of beauty than we witnessed on this. An abundance of choice cake, lemonade, wines, creams, jellies, etc., were partaken of with a zest by the many charming ladies present. A band was in attendance during the evening, which served to enliven the scene. It was a happy evening for all concerned, and its pleasures will not soon be forgotten.

Not the least of the pleasures enjoyed at an Oceana party were the dancing of the "Oceana Polka" composed in honor of and dedicated to the company, and a tableau in which the modest firemen massed about their hose cart and sang their company song, to the tune of "Life on the Ocean Wave":

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*Huzza for brave Thirty-six,
Ever prompt at the fire-bell's call;
Three cheers for brave Thirty-six,
Huzza for the Firemen all.
When the red flames wildest flash
On the startled midnight air,
Where the crackling embers crash,
Oceana's men are there.*

*Secure may the mother sleep,
With her babe upon her breast,
Brave hearts her vigils keep,
To guard them while they rest.
Though sudden flames alarm them,
In the dwelling where they lie,
The fires shall never harm them.
Oceana's men are nigh.*

*Then, laborer, cease thy toil,
And want, forget thy woes;
Though fiery serpents coil
'Round you in your repose,
No fatal fang shall wound you;
The Fireman's wary eye
Shall be a guard around you —
Oceana's men are nigh.*

Often after a fire public-spirited citizens, especially those whose lives or property had been saved, spread sumptuous collations for the volunteers, and they were also invited to help themselves at restaurants, taverns and coffee houses, near the scene of a conflagration. On their way home, after they had bedded down the engine and had entered an account of the day's doings in the company journal, the firemen were wont to stop for relaxation at the dance houses of the old Five Points. During the early years of the nineteenth century, before the Points, and particularly Paradise Square and Cow Bay, became the haunt of thieves, murderers, gangsters and prostitutes, and the center of the

most appalling tenement life on the American continent, the amusement to be found there was innocent enough, if rough and boisterous. A solid line of dance houses, precursors of the modern night clubs and cabarets, ran through the Point from Collect Street to Orange Street, now respectively Centre and Baxter. They were all furnished alike, with sanded floors, red bombazine curtains, a great hoop chandelier filled with candles, a long bench on one side of the room, and, in a corner, a small bar at which ale, porter and spruce beer could be purchased. There was plenty of entertainment besides drinking and dancing in these places, for the Points were always filled with strolling minstrels, fiddlers, acrobats, jugglers, sword swallows and others who performed in the dance houses for whatever small coins came their way. The first Punch and Judy show ever seen in the United States was exhibited at the Five Points by two Englishmen, one of whom varied the performance by singing such popular ballads as "Black-Eyed Susan" and "Will, the Wild Rover." Jerry Go Nimble sang comic songs and told jokes, and Tom Parsons gained great considerable renown by his ability to make impromptu rhymes, bringing in the name of whatever dance house he chanced to be honoring with his presence. Jack Ballagher, a gigantic Negro who wore huge earrings and wrapped his woolly head in a red handkerchief, astounded the pleasure seekers of the Five Points with his mastery of the fiddle; and it was there, too, that Jack Diamond developed the technique which made him champion hornpipe and breakdown dancer of the country. In later years Diamond came under the management of P. T. Barnum, who described him as "the best representative of Ethiopian breakdowns" of his time. And the noise and excitement which Diamond and others of his ilk created were increased by roaming girls, in shawls and spotted calico dresses, but barefooted, who flocked into the streets at sundown and sold mint from willow baskets and piping hot

roasting-ears from cedar-staved buckets. They competed with old Negro women, their heads bound in striped bandannas, and with huge gold rings dangling from their ears, who offered not only hot corn but baked pears floating in home-made syrup in an earthenware dish.

3

THE volunteers considered alcoholic beverages a necessity during the winter season, and the old records of the companies show many purchases of gin, whiskey and Holland spirits. Sometimes the fireman poured the liquor into his boots to keep his feet from freezing, but more often he poured it down his throat "to protect his innards." About 1800, and for some forty years thereafter, an important official of each engine and hose company was the steward, whose principal duty was to see that the firemen had plenty to drink at every fire. He also managed the chowder parties and other social gatherings. To pay for these functions, and for the liquor consumed, the companies used the money collected as fines for various infractions of the rules and regulations; and if sufficient funds were not obtained from this source, each man was taxed by his organization. The prices of whiskey and other liquors were not exorbitant, as in these parlous times. An early account of company expenditures shows that on October 4, 1792, the firemen paid six shillings for two bottles of gin; and some forty years later, in 1832, the steward of Fulton Engine Company No. 21 recorded the interesting historical facts that a half-gallon of brandy costs seventy-five cents, and four gallons of beer a dollar and a quarter. Over the bar, during the eighteen thirties, good whiskey was from two to four cents a glass.

Whenever an engine or a hose cart rolled to a conflagration, the steward was not required to haul on the drag-rope or man the brakes, but gave his entire attention to a tripartite keg which he carried slung over his shoulder, its

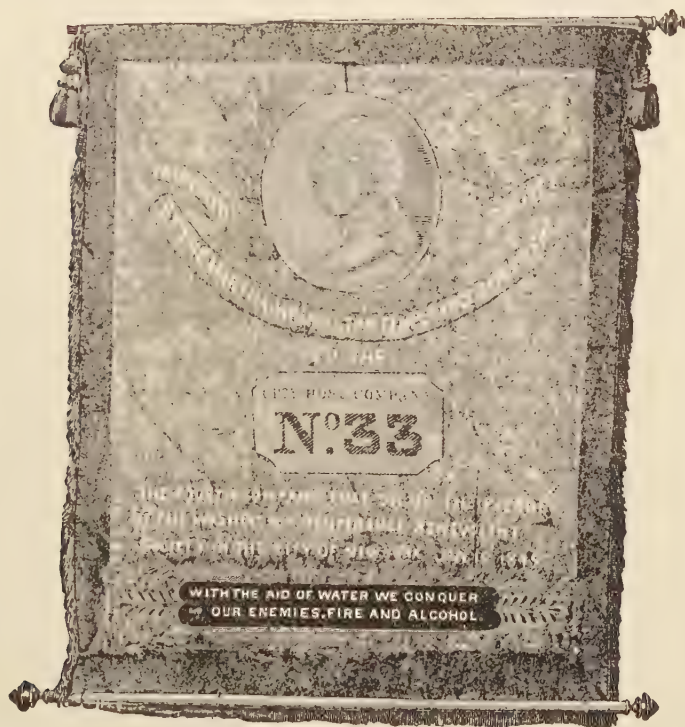
three compartments appropriately labelled "Brandy — Spirits — Gin." As the company memberships increased in size the kegs also became larger, and when they finally became too heavy to be carried they were gaudily painted and buckled to the cart or engine shaft, or lodged under the front running gear, while the stewards lugged great bags of bread and cheese, and such other food as they had been able to obtain. When an engine arrived at the fire the keg was carefully removed before the machine went into action, and the steward bustled about ladling out the liquor as required, meanwhile melodiously urging the firemen to "eat some more cheese, and a slice of good ham, and wash it well down with another good dram." The brandy was usually mixed with a little water, and a large pail kept handy for the firemen as they fell back exhausted from the brakes. Occasionally, however, the steward was remiss, as witness this entry in the minutes of Fulton Engine Company on March 7, 1815, "Our Steward neglected his duty in not furnishing refreshments, as some of us were wet." Apparently he failed again a few weeks later, for the minutes record that after the fire "previous to going home went to a Cook Shop and regaled ourselves with some hot coffee & the sight of two pretty Girls." Sometimes when the condition of company finances did not permit the purchase of liquor, it was provided by citizens. Thus wrote the secretary of Fulton Engine Company No. 21 in the minutes of August 12, 1813:

Mr. A. Wright, adjacent to the fire, afforded us on duty a good supply of Brandy & Water at the conclusion a good breakfast with hot Coffee. Retired in good order and sober.

For almost fifty years a keg of good liquor was considered almost as much a part of a New York fire engine as the hose pipe or the drag rope, but the temperance move-

UNIFORMS AND LIQUOR KEGS

ment smote the metropolis with its icy and demoralizing blast during the early eighteen forties, and innumerable crusading ladies began forming innumerable temperance societies. The agitation generally was called the Washingtonian Battery Against Rum, for the first President was still an object of veneration in those days, and his name was applied



Temperance Banner

to all sorts of curious enterprises. In choosing their designations the various organizations honored the spouses of famous men, and gave themselves such fanciful titles as Lady Washington, Lady Clinton, Lady Lafayette, Martha Washington, etc., Temperance Benevolent Societies. They made especial efforts to interest the firemen in the movement and

induce them to abandon the heinous practice of imbibing strong drink when they were tired and cold, and held rousing meetings in the churches and auditoriums, and even in the theatres, to which the members of all the hose and engine companies were invited. During the early months of the crusade some of the gatherings were held in the old Chatham Theatre in Chatham Street (now Park Row) just above Roosevelt Street, where, on February 17, 1843, Dan Emmett, Frank Brower, Billy Whitlock, and Dick Pelham performed the first minstrel show ever seen on any stage. The Chatham was erected in 1824 by M. Barrere, an irascible Frenchman whose attitude toward dramatic critics appears to have been singularly modern. Once when a performance at the Chatham had been adversely criticised, M. Barrere wrote to the editor of the critic's paper:

Sir:—I send you free admis to my theatre to praise my acturs. You no praise my acturs you shall not hœe free admis any more.

Tom Flynn, an Irish actor who had played with Charles Kean when the latter made his first appearance as Hamlet at the old Holiday Street Theatre in Baltimore in 1831, was part owner of the Chatham when the ladies began to belabor John Barleycorn.⁴ He generously permitted them to use the house for several meetings, but when they began to demand that he cancel scheduled performances and turn the theatre over entirely to the cause, he began to cast about for ways and means to get rid of them. So when a committee of ladies called upon him one afternoon he surprised them by saying:

"I have been thinking seriously over this tippling business, and I cannot fail to notice the great good that this temperance revival is causing among thousands in this city. Its good effects have reached even so rum-soaked a sinner as myself, and I am desirous of doing something for the cause. You can not only have the theatre on certain occa-

sions for meetings, but I will address the next gathering that is held there under the auspices of the Washingtonians."

Flynn was an accomplished and notorious drinker, and the announcement that he contemplated signing the pledge and would deliver a temperance oration attracted a crowd that taxed the capacity of the theatre. The actor spoke at great length, frequently refreshing himself from a pitcher filled with a colorless liquid, which sat on the table before him. After he had denounced rum for two hours, describing with great eloquence and striking imagery the downward path of the drunkard into the morass of woe and degradation, he was suddenly seen to totter. For a moment it seemed that he was going to faint, but when several anxious ladies would have rushed to his assistance, he stayed them with uplifted hand.

"Do not aid me, ladies!" he cried. "I am almost exhausted, but I must continue! I must do my part for the cause! Down with rum!"

He drank deeply from the pitcher and, impressed by his earnestness, the ladies applauded and returned to their seats. But a few moments later Flynn suddenly moaned, clapped a hand to his forehead, and fell senseless upon the stage. Friends carried him to his room in the old New England Hotel a few blocks away. The audience dispersed, uttering many expressions of praise and sympathy, but some of the temperance ladies clambered upon the stage and began sniffing at the pitcher from which Flynn had taken so many copious draughts. They soon discovered that it had contained old Swan gin. During his discourse Flynn had drunk almost half a gallon. The ladies held no more meetings in the Chatham Theatre, and the roar of laughter which went up when the city learned what had happened seriously hampered the progress of the crusade.

Another hotbed of teetotalism, and a favorite place for anti-rum gatherings, was Sackett's Hall in Division Street

where those who had wrestled with the demon Barleycorn customarily made impromptu speeches at the close of the set program. John J. Mount of Hose Company No. 2, a boatbuilder and later a Police Captain, was an inveterate attendant at the Sackett's Hall gatherings, and was an eager pledge-signer. He had never made a speech, for he lacked social grace and poise, and at all functions was as dumb as the proverbial oyster. But one night, when testimony was called for, young Mount got to his feet and strode nervously to the platform. His comrades immediately began twitting him:

"Hullo, Jack, what's the matter with you?"

"Come off!"

"Are you going to sing?"

The young ladies giggled, but Mount mounted the rostrum with great determination, and amazed everyone by making the most stirring temperance address that had ever been heard in Sackett's Hall. Later he divulged the secret. He had not, as readers of modern advertisements might suspect, purchased a prescribed course of culture; he had simply employed his brother George, who had literary leanings, to write a speech which he had memorized. In the first flush of success young Mount had agreed to address other temperance meetings, but his brother refused to write another oration.

Despite the ridicule with which a large part of New York's population greeted the crusade, the campaign to save the firemen for sobriety prospered to a remarkable degree. After a brief but very vigorous offensive the energetic ladies persuaded every member of Union Engine Company No 18 to sign the pledge, and rewarded them with a gaudy silken banner to hang in the engine house.⁵ A few months later Niagara Engine Company No. 10 marched into the fold at the behest of the Lady Lafayette Society; and in March, 1842, Clinton Engine Company No.

41, which called its house at Attorney and Delancy Streets Clinton Hall, was likewise captured by the Lady Clinton Temperance Benevolent Society, which presented the firemen with a banner at elaborate services in the "Rev. Mr.



A Drunkard's Dream

Bellamy's Church, Stanton Street near the Bowery." Three of the songs which pealed forth on this joyful occasion were old favorites among the teetotalers — "Come Ye Who Love Our Cause," "Round the Temperance Standard Rally," and "The Temperance Trumpet Blow." Perhaps the latter was the most popular:

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

*The temperance trumpet blow,
That all may hear the sound;
And shun the drunkard's wretched way,
For paths where bliss is found.*

*The temp'rance trumpet blow,
That all may hear the sound;
And shun the drunkard's wretched way,
For paths where bliss is found.*

*The temp'rance trumpet blow,
And bid the young come near;
Youth is the time to serve the Lord,
With zeal and humble fear.*

*The temp'rance trumpet blow,
That all with hoary hairs,
The cup of death may now renounce,
And 'scape its countless snares.*

*The temp'rance trumpet blow,
That all may hear and flee,
The drunkard's path of woe and shame,
And endless misery.*

But by far the best song on the program was "Come to the Clinton Hall," which was written by a gifted fireman-poet and most affectingly sung by all the members of the company. It was also printed on the handbill which announced the gathering:

*Come forth, ye rummers, come,
Come to the Clinton Hall;
The pledge of Freedom sign —
Come, banish alcohol,
Rum, brandy, beer and wine.*

Chorus

*Come, come, come to the Clinton Hall,
The pledge of Freedom sign —
Come, banish alcohol,
Rum, brandy, beer and wine
From the dens of drunken mirth,
The dark abodes of rum,
Where sorrow has its birth.*

UNIFORMS AND LIQUOR KEGS

*Ye that the brandy red
Are mighty to consume,
Come! let it ne'er be said
Ye fear the Temp'rance room.*

*Ye beer-ers leave your beers,
Brightly although it foam —
To the water cold and clear,
Ye red-faced beer-ers, come.*

*Ye boys who quaff the wine
With faces all in bloom,
March up in godly line —
Room for the wine boys, room.*

*Come one, come all, and flee
The drunkard's dreadful doom.
Awake, arise, be free —
To health, wealth, honor, come.*

Inspired by these noble sentiments so graphically expressed, the volunteers of Hose Companies Nos. 33, 13 and 5, and Engine Company No. 27, rushed pell-mell into glorious temperance and began battling for the cause, each company receiving a silken banner from the grateful ladies and a brass trumpet from the city, which was controlled by those giants of virtue and morality, the politicians of Tammany Hall. Others followed, and within a half dozen years the firemen of more than a score of companies had sworn individually and collectively that liquor would never again pass their lips. They were thus compelled to do their drinking at fires and elsewhere from flasks, and the brightly painted keg which had bounced so merrily as the engine rattled over the cobble stones was gone forever.

THE GREAT FIRE OF 1835

I

SOME OF THE winters in old New York were fearfully cold, with snowfalls that would seem extraordinary to the inhabitants of the modern metropolis, although the fact that no reliable records were kept prior to 1871 makes it almost impossible to ascertain the exact state of the weather in any particular year. Temperatures from twenty to thirty degrees below zero, however, appear to have been fairly common in colonial times and during the early years of the Republic; and the freezing of the East and Hudson Rivers and of the Bay, and even of Long Island Sound, are frequently mentioned in contemporary newspapers and historical accounts.¹ Quite often the ice was so thick and strong that heavily laden wagons and sleds passed back and forth between Long Island and Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, and New York and Staten Island.

In 1717 not only New York City, but parts of Massachusetts and other New England states, were covered by snow that ranged in depth from ten to twenty feet and buried many one-story buildings, so that the people were compelled to dig tunnels from one house to another. The Hudson River was frozen solid during the winter of 1779-1780, and likewise the East River, New York Bay, and Long Island Sound. Early in February, 1780, a troop of cavalry and several heavy pieces of ordnance were moved on the ice from the Battery to Staten Island, and within the next

few days eighty-nine loaded sleighs made the trip. Only a narrow, sluggish channel remained open at the widest part of Long Island Sound, and several men walked across from Long Island to Norwalk, Connecticut, followed by half a dozen three-horse sleds piled high with oaken wood, which brought five dollars a load in the Connecticut markets. In 1818 Long Island Sound was again entirely closed by the ice, and the Hudson River was so firmly frozen that many wagons and carriages crossed between New York and New Jersey. "Many tents were pitched on the ice," said the *Long Island Star* on February 16, 1818, "where they sold liquor, and roasted clams and oysters; and some persons attempted to roast an ox, but it failed; from the heat of roasting clams, &c., the ice became quite weak near the furnaces, which occasioned their removal to new locations nearby." Similar conditions prevailed in 1820-1821, and were thus described in various issues of the *New York American* from January 22 to January 27, 1821:

On Saturday morning [January 20th] Long Island Sound was crossed on the ice from Sands Point to the opposite shore, a distance of about eight miles. . . . Both the East and North [Hudson] Rivers were crossed on the ice, and the Bay is nearly filled with floating ice, which will probably be closed by another cold night. . . . The North River continues [on January 25th] to be crossed with safety on the ice; the distance has been measured, and found to be one mile from Cortlandt Street to Powles Hook. The Hoboken ferry boat, with fifty-seven persons and twenty-three horses on board, drifted on Wednesday evening below Governor's Island and was enclosed in the ice, where she now remains. The people suffered much from the cold during the night, although none were frozen. . . . On Thursday night last the cold was so excessive that Long Island Sound opposite the west chop of this harbor [Bridgeport,

Connecticut] was completely closed by the ice; the distance at this place is about thirty miles. Such an event, it is believed, has not taken place during the last forty years. . . . More than a thousand persons crossed the North River yesterday [January 26th] on the ice; produce of every kind was taken over in sleds, and hundreds were seen skating in the middle of the river. There came from Staten Island, on the ice, a boat and six men, viz., John Vanderbilt, A. Lawrence, William Drake, Robert Davis, Lewis Farnham, and Mr. Wainwright. . . . The mail for Staten Island was yesterday taken down over the ice by Daniel Simonson and Joseph Seguire. Many persons walked from Long Island to Staten Island — such a circumstance has not been witnessed before since the year 1780.

The extremely cold weather of 1820–1821 caused much suffering among the poor, and led to the establishment of the first bread lines and soup houses in New York, mainly through the generosity of the butchers and the bakers. In several of the churches and taverns collections were taken up for the benefit of the destitute, one on January 30, 1820, amounting to \$2,106.64.

2

WHEN darkness fell upon New York on Wednesday, December 16, 1835, the metropolis settled grimly down to endure a night that promised to be as cold and disagreeable as any of olden times. The thermometer, which had been hovering between twelve and fifteen degrees below zero for more than a week, had suddenly dropped to seventeen,² and from the north-northwest roared an icy gale that whistled threateningly in the eaves and rocked the smaller houses until they tottered on their foundations. The Hudson and the East Rivers were frozen, the wells, cisterns and reservoirs contained nothing but solid blocks of ice, and only a

tiny trickle flowed sluggishly through the ice-choked logs by which water was piped from the emergency sources. Water was the scarcest commodity in the city; the watermen who ordinarily peddled it from carts had been unable to make deliveries and had finally been driven from the streets by the cold; and even the richest citizens were compelled to lug home cakes of ice and melt them in their ovens.

Upon the sidewalks and pavements lay two feet of closely packed snow; it had been falling steadily for twenty-four hours, and its smooth surface was unbroken save for the footprints of the struggling pedestrians, and the ruts worn by the omnibuses and the few carriages and wagons which had been abroad during the day. The business and financial district, from Wall Street southward to the Battery, was deserted except for an occasional watchman, making his rounds bent double against the fierce blasts of the tempest. In the engine and hose company houses a few firemen huddled before blazing logs, still weary from their exertions of two nights before, when they had fought desperately for hours to check conflagrations that had destroyed nine buildings in Water Street and half a dozen at Christie and Delancey Streets. In the bell towers of City Hall and other fire alarm stations the bell-ringers dozed uneasily in their great-coats. And in the air, overlaying the city like a pall, was that curious feel of fire with which every old fireman is familiar, and which a scientific writer of the period, in an article for the *Daily Advertiser*, ascribed to "an inflammable vacuum in the atmosphere, self-igniting and irresistible."

A few minutes after nine o'clock Peter A. Holmes, a private watchman employed by the insurance companies, saw a thin wisp of smoke floating from a window of No. 25 Merchant Street (now a part of Hanover Street), a five-story structure occupied by Henry Barbaud, importer of French goods, and Comstock & Andrews, dry-goods merchants.³

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

Unable to enter the building, Holmes raced madly through the streets crying for help, and within a few minutes the great bell in the cupola of City Hall loosed its brazen clamor into the storm. Other stations quickly took up the alarm, and soon the city was filled with the frenzied ringing of bells, and the hoarse shouts of excited men as the firemen, assisted by frightened citizens, pushed and pulled their engines



Great Fire of 1835

through the deep snow. But in less than half an hour, long before the first feeble stream of water had splashed upon the flames, the fire had spread to Exchange Place and Water Street, destroying the buildings on both sides of Old and Coenties Slips, and thence to Beaver, Front and South Streets, and to Jones' Lane. By midnight the conflagration was raging fiercely in a rectangular area about thirteen acres in extent and including about seventeen blocks bounded, roughly, by Coenties Slip and Broad, Wall and South Streets. This was the business and financial heart of New

York, containing the banks, the insurance offices, the Merchants' Exchange,⁴ many dwellings and factories, several churches, a majority of the newspaper plants, and the most important retail and wholesale stores and warehouses. The crowded shipping in the dock and slips along the East River was in great danger, but fortunately the channel had been kept open, and it was saved by being moved into the middle of the stream. The brig *Powhatan*, lying between Murray's Wharf and Coenties Slip, caught fire, but the flames were soon extinguished by members of her crew.

Every fire engine, hose cart and hook and ladder truck in the city answered the alarm, and within a few hours after Watchman Holmes had discovered the beginnings of the conflagration more than seventy-five pieces of fire-fighting apparatus were on the scene, while hundreds of citizens had brought buckets, pails and tubs. But most of the engines and hose carts were useless, and very little could be done to stop the progress of the flames. The tiny trickle that came from the hydrants would not throw more than twenty feet, and it was so feeble that the wind blew it back upon the firemen who held the hose-pipes, quickly coating them with ice. Additional water could be obtained only by melting the cisterns and the wells, or by chopping through the ice at the ends of piers and docks. Almost as rapidly as the water was pumped into a line of hose it froze and impeded the flow, and if an engine stopped working for more than a few seconds the machinery froze so solid that it could not be started again without breaking the king-bolt or some other essential part of the mechanism. Several engines were lowered off the docks on to the ice and worked successfully from that vantage point, and Black Joke Engine No. 33 was dragged on to the deck of a brig, and from there pumped water through three other engines and finally into Engine No. 13, which played on the fire in Wall Street under the direction of its foreman, Zophar Mills. The men of the Black Joke,

noted for their strength and endurance, labored at the brakes without cessation for five hours. Then they stopped to rest, and a minute later the engine was so frozen that it could not be operated. Thereafter it was useless, and was finally taken to the company house, where hot water was poured into the machinery. Then it was returned to the fire. Two engines were destroyed by fires which were built under them to thaw them out.

Although the stream of water which poured from the hose pipe of Engine No. 13, the result of the efforts of a hundred firemen, possessed scant driving force, it was the



Great Fire of 1835 from Wall and Williams Streets

principal means of checking the flames at Wall Street and preventing the destruction of the northern half of the city. The buildings on the north side of Wall Street, most of which were of stone construction, resisted the advance of the conflagration for several hours, but at length the shingle roof of the Tontine Building, on the northwest corner of Wall and Water Streets, which housed the famous Tontine Coffee House,⁵ caught fire at a cornice. The firemen strove desperately to get a stream of water upon the blaze,

for they realized that if the flames once gained a foothold there nothing could prevent the fire from sweeping through the entire settled portion of Manhattan Island. But the engines would not throw so high. Several men tried to clamber to the roof of the Tontine, but they could not maintain their footing against the gale, and two were blown into the street and seriously injured. At length Zophar Mills ordered the firemen of Engine Company No. 13 to bring forward a high counter which had been taken from a burning store, and to place it directly beneath the blazing cornice. On the counter the firemen braced a brandy puncheon, and atop the great cask two firemen climbed with the hose-pipe. Augmented crews labored desperately at the line of engines, and finally the water was forced to the roof, drenching the cornice and extinguishing the fire. Thereafter a stream was kept playing constantly upon the shingled roof of the Tontine.

Two other structures, the *Journal of Commerce* building in Garden Street and the restaurant of Downing, the Oyster King, in Broad Street, were saved by the use of vinegar, great casks of which were rolled out of Downing's place and poured into the engine, which in turn pumped it on to the flames. But the supply of vinegar was soon exhausted, and realizing that they could not obtain enough water to accomplish anything, the firemen turned their attention to saving property. At first it did not seem likely that the conflagration would extend to Hanover Square, and in that apparently safe area were heaped great piles of valuable merchandise, including silks, satins, laces, Cashmere shawls, baskets of champagne, and cases of wine and fine tea. But about an hour after midnight the warehouse of Peter Remsen & Company, on the southeast corner of the Square, suddenly burst into flames, and a gust of wind blew great streamers of fire from the windows of the building across the Square. The piles of merchandise instantly ignited

and were destroyed before rescuers could reach them. Many merchants and other business men carried their stocks into the Dutch Reformed Church in Garden Street, and into the Merchants' Exchange, on the south side of Wall Street between William and Hanover Streets and extending rearward to Exchange Place. But both buildings were eventually burned. The Exchange did not catch fire until two o'clock



Great Fire of 1835 from Exchange Place

Thursday morning. Half a dozen sailors, members of a detachment which had been sent to the fire from the Navy Yard, under command of Captain Mix, carried out a large quantity of goods, and also attempted to save a statue of Alexander Hamilton which stood in the rotunda of the building. It was fifteen feet high, and had been chiselled by Ball Hughes from white marble. The sailors had partly removed it from the pedestal, when a warning cry was raised that the Exchange was about to collapse, and they fled into the street just in time to save their lives. A moment later the roof fell in and the statue was buried beneath the flaming ruins. Within an hour the church in Garden Street had also caught, and the flames spread

so rapidly that none of the property which had been stored in it could be saved. Soon after the building was discovered to be on fire someone began playing a funeral dirge upon the church organ, one of the most famous musical instruments of the time. The solemn strains soared high above the roar of the flames and the shouts of the firemen, stopping suddenly in the middle of a bar when the building collapsed. The identity of the musician was never learned. He is believed to have perished.

Hour after hour the fire roared and crackled, while the lower half of Manhattan Island was enveloped in a billowing cloak of dense black smoke, pierced by groping ribbons of flame that reached high into the heavens. The illumination was so great against the sky that it was visible a hundred miles away, and from the Long Island and New Jersey shores the metropolis appeared to be one vast sheet of fire. Throughout the night the wind continued to blow with the violence of a gale, carrying burning embers across the East River to Brooklyn and depositing them as far inland as Joralemon Street. Many of the buildings which burned so furiously were new structures covered with iron or copper roofing, and the heat soon became so great that the metal melted and poured off the roofs in fiery rivulets, further endangering the firemen who had already crowded perilously close to the flames with their puny streams of water. One of the stores facing Hanover Square contained a great quantity of sheet lead, which melted and ran together into such large masses that the owner, when the conflagration had subsided sufficiently to permit a search of the ruins, was obliged to quarry it out. But despite the terrific heat that transformed metal into liquid, the cold a few yards away from the fire was so intense that scores of firemen hobbled about with frozen toes, fingers and ears, while many avoided more serious injury by improvising cloaks from blankets, in which they cut holes for their heads and

arms. Others became so ill from fatigue and exposure that they never entirely recovered.

The conflagration, by far the most devastating that has ever occurred in New York, threw the entire city into a ferment of excitement and terror. Crowds that seriously hampered the work of the firemen surged hysterically back and forth through the downtown streets, while from the rookeries of the Five Points and the other tenement districts came hordes of rowdies, hoodlums and criminals, attended by their wives, sweethearts and children. They immediately plunged into a very saturnalia of lawlessness. Looting began as soon as it became apparent that the watchmen, firemen and a majority of the respectable citizens were too busy to protect property from marauding bands of thugs. It continued almost without interruption until the devastated area was placed under martial law, almost twenty-four hours after the fire had started, and was being patrolled by the Third and Ninth militia regiments and by Marines from the Navy Yard. Cases of wine, barrels and kegs of liquor, which had been carried from stores by salvage parties, were smashed and their contents greedily drunk; it was estimated after the fire that some ten thousand bottles of champagne alone had been consumed by the mobs which swarmed about the blazing buildings, stealing and fighting. Men and women from the Five Points staggered drunkenly about with their rags hidden beneath rich cloaks, and silks and satins of the finest quality; huge Negroes swaggered before their fellows resplendent in stolen frock coats and plug hats; scores returned to their dens at the Five Points laden with great bundles of clothing and valuable property of all sorts. Half a dozen men, apparently frenzied by the unparalleled opportunity for thieving, were caught by watchmen trying to set fire to houses beyond the burning district. One man who was discovered applying the torch to a building at Stone and Broad Streets was promptly

hanged to a tree by a group of irate citizens. His body, frozen stiff, dangled for three days before the watchmen found time to cut it down. After the flames had been brought under control the military and watchmen turned their attention to the looters and arrested several hundred men and women, most of whom were released by the Magistrates after their plunder had been taken from them and returned, if identifiable, to the rightful owners.

By three o'clock Thursday morning, December 17th, it was apparent that only the most heroic measures could save the entire city from destruction. Mayor Cornelius W. Lawrence, after a consultation with fire department engineers and members of the Common Council, decided to blow up buildings at various points and create gaps which it was hoped the flames could not cross. But once the decision had been made, a new difficulty arose. The sale of powder was forbidden in New York, and a sufficiency for the purpose could not be found in the city. Messengers were sent to Fort Columbus on Governor's Island, but the soldiers there had only a few pounds. At length an emissary from the Mayor rode post-haste to the Navy Yard, and a barge was dispatched, against a strong head-tide, to the naval magazine at Red Hook for a supply of the explosive. It arrived at dawn, in the custody of eighty Marines and a dozen sailors, who carried the kegs of powder wrapped in blankets and pea-jackets. The Marines were posted along South Street from Fulton Ferry to Wall Street, and up Wall Street as far as the Merchants' Exchange, and the demolition of the buildings was begun at once. But it was not until noon on Thursday that the necessary break was made at Coenties Slip by the destruction of a large brick warehouse occupied by Wyncoop & Company, wholesale grocers. The northward progress of the conflagration was stopped, and what remained of New York had been saved. An hour after the sailors had begun their mining operations a hundred firemen

arrived from Newark with a half-dozen fire engines and several hose carts, and although tired from a two-hour train ride across the Jersey Meadows, went immediately to work, relieving a like number of New York firemen who were ordered home to rest. The New Jersey firemen brought word also that a locomotive had been sent to Philadelphia to bring additional help, but it was not until noon on the following Saturday that the Pennsylvania fire fighters arrived. On six miles of the railroad route from New York to Philadelphia no rails had yet been laid, and across that stretch of country, mostly thick sand, the Philadelphians had dragged their engines and hose carts by dint of tremendous labor. They were too late to fight the flames, but they performed a useful service in washing down the ruins.

3

BUSINESS was entirely suspended in New York on the day following the great fire, and for a while it seemed that the city had been dealt a blow from which it would never recover. Thousands gathered in silent crowds about the great heaps of ruins that still sent up clouds of black and dismal smoke, while merchants and clerks stood weeping beside the pitiful remnants of their stocks of goods. How the metropolis appeared on the morning of December 17, 1835, was thus described by the elder James Gordon Bennett, who was struggling to obtain a foothold in New York journalism with his new penny newspaper, the *Herald*, the first issue of which had appeared on May 6, 1835:

At nine o'clock yesterday morning I went to see the awful scene. It was heartrending in the extreme. On approaching the corner of Wall and William Streets the smoking ruins were awful. The whole of the southern side of Wall Street was nearly down. The street was full of people, the sidewalks encumbered with boxes, bales, bundles, desks,

safes and loose articles. There was no possibility of then proceeding farther down William Street. Both sides were burned down and the street was filled with hot bricks, burning goods and heaps of rubbish. United States soldiers were stationed here and there to protect the goods, yet the boys, men and women, of all colors, were stealing and pilfering as fast as they could. On going down Wall Street I found it difficult to get through the crowd. The hose of the fire engines was run along the street and frozen. The front blocks of houses between Exchange Place and Pearl Street, on Wall, were standing, behind which were all ruin and desolation. Proceeding along the ruins, sometimes on Pearl Street, sometimes out of it, I found several groups of men and boys digging among the hot dust and bricks. In several other places there were small groups of pilferers and thieves. In the center of Hanover Square I found a variety of goods and merchandise burning. Men and boys were warming themselves at a fire made of fine French calicoes and Irish linens. From Hanover Square I could neither proceed south, east nor west. William Street, Pearl and down to the wharf were all impassable. The smoke was suffocating. The whole of the space between the corner of William and Pearl up to the Exchange, with all the streets, stores, etc., I saw to be a heap of utter ruins. I saw a group of men stirring a fire in the center of Wall Street, between Water and Front. On going near to warm myself, I saw that the fire was made out of the richest merchandise and fine furniture from the elegant counting rooms. . . .

I proceeded to the corner of Wall and Front Streets. Here I saw a horrible scene of desolation. Looking down South Street toward the south nothing could be seen but awful ruins. From the corner of Wall Street I proceeded southwardly, for I cannot now talk of streets; all their sites are buried in ruins and smoking bricks. No vessels lay here at the wharves; all were gone. I went down the wharf; the

basin was floating with calicoes, silks, teas, packing cases, and other valuable merchandise. Piles of coarse linen and sacking encumbered the street. Going a little farther south, on what was formerly Front Street, I encountered a cloud of smoke that burst from a smoking pile of stores. Emerging from this sirocco, I found myself near a group of boys and ragged men. A fire was hissing away, made out of tea boxes and Hyson tea itself. Several little dirty girls were gathering up the tea and putting it away in baskets. Proceeding farther, I encountered hogsheads of raw sugar, half-emptied, and their contents strewed, like the Hyson tea, over the pavements and bricks. Boys and girls were eating it as fast as they could. I could not get farther than a short distance, down Front from the corner of Wall. The smoke, ruin, hot bricks, all were too horrible to get over or through. Retracing my steps, I returned up Wall Street. All Broad Street was crowded with goods, merchandise, carts, porters and crowds. From the center of this street, looking to the left over the buildings in the direction of William, I saw nothing but flames ascending to Heaven, and prodigious clouds of smoke curling after it as if from a volcano. Emerging from Broad Street I went to the Bowling Green. Here was deposited on the sidewalks half a million of fine goods. The whole street was lined. I went down Whitehall Slip. It was equally crowded with fine merchandise. One whole end of the Battery was covered with the richest silk, sarsnet [a sort of thin silk fabric], brocades and woolen cloths.

On reaching the corner of Front Street and Coenties Slip the most awful scene burst upon my eyes. I beheld the several blocks of seven-story stores, full of rich merchandise, on the northern side of the slip, in one bright, burning, horrible flame. About forty buildings were on fire at one moment. All the upper part of the slip on the northern and eastern sides was burning or burned up.

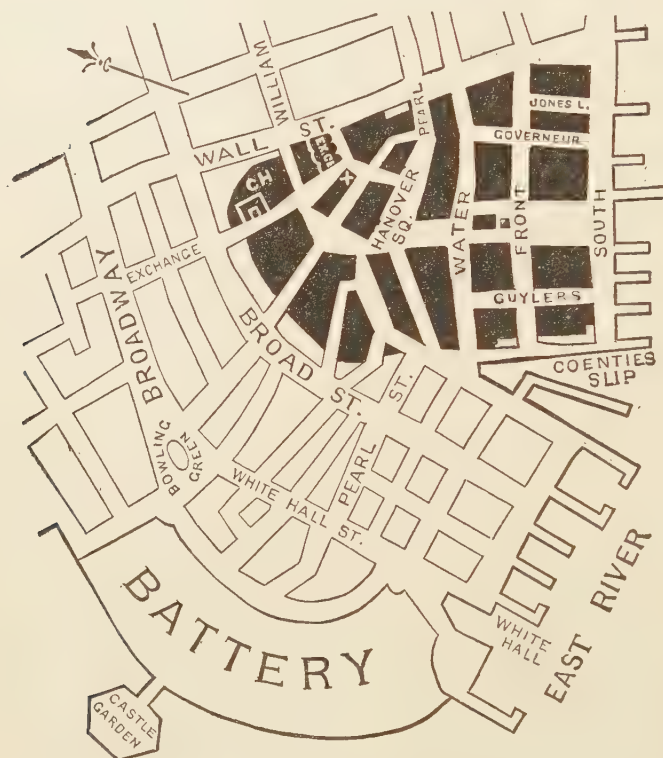
A more exact, but less picturesque account of the damage was given by the *Courier & Enquirer*, one of the two morning papers — the other was the *Mercantile* — which escaped destruction:

South Street is burned down from Wall Street to Coenties Slip. Front Street is burned down from Wall Street to Coenties Slip. Pearl Street is burned down from Wall Street to Coenties Alley; the fire was there stopped by blowing up a building. Stone Street is burned down from William Street to No. 32 on the one side, and No. 39 on the other. Beaver Street is burned down half-way to Broad Street. Exchange Place is burned down from Hanover Square to within three doors of Broad Street; here the flames were stopped by blowing up a house. William Street is burned down from Wall Street to South Street, both sides of the way. Wall Street is burned down on the south side from William Street to South Street, with the exception of Nos. 51, 53, 55, 59 and 61, opposite this office. All the streets and houses within the above limits are destroyed. The following will be found a tolerably accurate account of the number of houses and stores now leveled with the ground: Wall Street, twenty-six; South Street, thirty-seven; Front Street, eighty; Exchange Place, sixty-two; William Street, forty-four; Coenties Slip, sixteen; Hanover Square, three; Gouverneur's Lane, twenty; Cuyler's Alley, twenty; Pearl Street, seventy-nine; Water Street, seventy-six; Hanover Street (including Merchant Street), sixteen; Exchange Street, thirty-one; Old Slip, thirty-three; Stone Street, forty; Beaver Street, twenty-three; Jones' Lane, ten; Mill Street, thirty-eight.

According to the computation of the *Courier & Enquirer*, the number of buildings destroyed was six hundred and fifty-four. Other contemporary accounts give different

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

figures, ranging from five hundred and twenty-eight to six hundred and seventy-four. The loss was estimated at from twenty million to twenty-two million dollars. The amount of insurance in effect was about ten million dollars, very



*The Great Fire of 1835. Black Blocks Were Burned.
X shows Where Fire Started*

little of which was ever paid, for the disaster was so overwhelming that most of the insurance companies, and many banks, were compelled to suspend operations.⁶ Arthur Tappan, a silk merchant who helped found the American Tract Society and the *Journal of Commerce*, and was prominent in the Abolition movement, is said to have fared better than

any other business man whose establishment was in the burned area. His store was a stone structure at No. 122 Pearl Street, near Hanover Square. Soon after the Abolition Riots of 1833 and 1834, when his place was attacked several times by mobs, he equipped his windows with shutters of thick boiler iron, which resisted the flames long enough for one hundred thousand dollars' worth of merchandise to be carried from the building. Most of Tappan's goods were saved by Negroes, who guarded it after it had been removed to a place of safety, so that none was stolen. The New York insurance companies would not write policies on Tappan's property because he was an Abolitionist, but in Boston he had obtained insurance amounting to three hundred thousand dollars, all of which was paid.

4

THE Chief Engineer of the Fire Department during the great conflagration of 1835 was James Gulick, better known as Handsome Jim, who stood six feet and two inches in his socks, possessed tremendous physical strength, and was considered the finest-looking fireman in the New York of his time. He became head of the department in 1831, after many years of service in the ranks of Engine Company No. 11, and as an Assistant Engineer. After the fire had been extinguished the newspapers and most of the leading citizens praised Gulick's conduct during the fire, but several Tammany politicians whom he had prevented from meddling with the affairs of the fire department started a campaign of denunciation, declaring that if he had been a capable leader the flames would have been confined to a very small area. They also criticised him severely after a fire which, on February 18, 1836, destroyed the offices and plant of the Methodist Book Concern, in Mulberry Street. As in 1835, the night was intensely cold and the hydrants and cisterns were frozen, so that once more the firemen were unable

to obtain a sufficient quantity of water. Consequently, the flames spread rapidly, and within a few hours the six-story building had been consumed. Nothing of value was saved except the account books of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. Next morning many fragments of books were found on Long Island, whither they had been carried by the wind. One was a charred leaf of the Bible, containing the sixty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, none of which was legible except the eleventh verse:

Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

Gulick's political enemies at length induced the Common Council to order an investigation, and on May 3, 1836, the Fire and Water Committee held a special meeting at which Alderman Paul of the Fourth Ward delivered a vitriolic speech demanding the Chief Engineer's removal from office. Gulick promptly called the Alderman a liar and departed, whereupon the Committee went into secret session and voted unanimously to recommend his dismissal to the Common Council. Next afternoon, a few hours before the scheduled meeting of the Council, fire was discovered in the Union Market at Houston and Second Streets. Because of the importance of the district most of the companies answered the alarm, and Gulick took charge of the work of fighting the flames. The fire was well under control when Charles G. Hubbs of Engine Company No. 13, who had learned what had happened at the session of the Committee, approached Gulick and said:

"Boss, your throat is cut!"

"It can't be possible!" protested Gulick.

"It is, though," Hubbs replied. "The Committee has recommended your removal."

Gulick stepped back a few paces, reversed his hat, which he had been wearing with the broad flap to the front to protect his face, and walked solemnly down the line of fire engines and hose carts. The gravity of his demeanor attracted the attention of the firemen, several of whom asked what had occurred.

"I am your chief no longer," replied Gulick. "They have voted to remove me."

The news spread quickly, and when it had been confirmed the firemen stopped working their engines and hauled the apparatus back to their company houses. The fire promptly started afresh, and another alarm was rung. The firemen answered it, but arrived with their hats reversed in imitation of Gulick's gesture, and declared that they would not work until Gulick had been reinstated. A messenger was hurriedly dispatched to City Hall to apprise Mayor Cornelius W. Lawrence of the situation, and the Mayor forthwith hastened to the scene, bearing his staff of office and other emblems of authority. He commanded the firemen to throw water upon the flames, and attempted to direct them, but they hooted at him and cheered lustily for the Chief Engineer. They finally became so threatening that the Mayor was compelled to retreat. He returned to City Hall, and finding the Common Council in session, angrily demanded that Gulick be dismissed at once, which was done. John Ryker, jr., an Assistant Engineer, was appointed to succeed him.

By this time the fire had assumed serious proportions, and it was apparent that unless something was done several blocks, and perhaps all that part of the city, would be destroyed. Carlisle Norwood, a Fire Warden, induced John Coger, Foreman of Engine Company No. 8, to put his men to work, but they had no sooner manned the brakes than other firemen cut the hose in half a dozen places. Norwood and another Fire Warden, Benjamin H. Guion, then went in search of Gulick, and found him at his office in Canal

Street, where he operated a small crockery business. After a great deal of discussion Gulick at length agreed to return to the fire, and a few minutes later he walked down the lines of engines, shouting:

"Now, boys, let's put this fire out. We will attend to the Fire and Water Committee afterward."

Cheering madly, the firemen set to work and within a short time had extinguished the flames.

Indignation meetings were held next day in every fire-house in the city, and the firemen adopted resolutions notifying the city authorities that they would abandon their apparatus unless Gulick was reinstated. They repeated their demands several times during the ensuing week, but at length, finding that the Common Council paid no attention to them, eight hundred firemen marched in a body to City Hall and presented their resignations. New York was thus left without a fire department save for the two or three companies which had decided to accept the action of the Council and remain loyal to Ryker, and there was great fear that a conflagration might consume the city. Fortunately no serious fires occurred, and after a few days, however, some of the engines were manned by exempt firemen and other citizens who had had fire-fighting experience. The men who had left their posts organized the "Resigned Firemen's Association" and swore eternal fealty to Gulick. They nominated the former Chief Engineer for City Register, and when Tammany Hall refused him a place on the Democratic ticket the firemen procured an endorsement from the Whigs, who had always been in the minority in New York and were anxious to obtain support. After a strenuous and bitter campaign Gulick defeated the Tammany candidate by six thousand fifty-four votes, the largest majority ever received by an office-seeker in New York up to that time. At the spring elections the following year the firemen again voted solidly against Tammany Hall, and the

Whigs gained control of the city. Every Whig candidate had been pledged to remove Ryker as Chief Engineer, and he was dismissed from office at the first session of the new Common Council. Cornelius V. Anderson, a member of Engine Company No. 1, was appointed Chief Engineer, and



Gulick's Campaign Poster

all of the resigned firemen immediately returned to their companies. The Whig Council also passed an ordinance authorizing the Board of Foremen and Assistant Foremen to elect the Chief Engineer thereafter.

However, Tammany Hall was not yet through with the Gulick faction. In 1839 the astute Tammany politicians defeated the Whigs, and as soon as they had organized their Common Council twenty prominent Democratic politicians formed hose companies, which were reported to the Council at a secret midnight meeting of which only Tammany Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen had been notified. The only Whig present was David Graham, Assistant Alderman from the Fifteenth Ward, who had heard that the Council intended to induct the new organization into the Fire

Department, and had determined to prevent it if possible. He protested against the proposed action, and when his objections were ignored he rose in his seat and solemnly proclaimed:

"At this dead hour of the night you are going to do the darkest deed ever perpetrated by human beings!"

He stalked from the chamber, and the Council, unabashed, proceeded to legalize the new companies. This added twenty Foremen and a like number of Assistant Foremen to the Board of Foremen and Assistants, and gave Tammany Hall control of that body. A meeting was immediately held, and the Tammany candidate for Chief Engineer, Edward M. Hoffmire of Engine Company No. 6, was elected over Anderson by nine votes. But the action of the Common Council had precipitated a terrific uproar; the firemen angrily threatened dire political vengeance, and the newspapers published denunciatory editorials pointing out that the new companies had no equipment, and that none of their members had ever had any fire-fighting experience. They were sneeringly referred to as political firemen, but were more generally known as June Bugs because they had been appointed during the month of June. In the records of the time the troubles are always referred to as the June Bug Excitement. Reporters were unable to find more than a dozen of the new men who had any idea what sort of apparatus they were supposed to operate, and Oliver Charlick, a Tammany politician, set the whole town laughing by announcing that "I belong to one of those things that spins around in the middle [meaning a hose reel], but I've never been able to find out where she lays."

The outburst of criticism finally frightened even Tammany Hall, and the Common Council neglected to confirm Hoffmire's election. Anderson therefore remained Chief Engineer until he was succeeded by Alfred Carson in 1848, and retired to become head of the Insurance Patrol.

THE GREAT FIRE OF 1835

Fewer than half a dozen of the new companies ever effected a permanent organization, most of them dropping out of the Department as soon as they had accomplished their purpose. Gulick was again a candidate for Register when his term had expired, but the firemen had by this time returned to the Tammany fold, and he was defeated. He quickly sank into the obscurity of private life, eventually failed in business, and died in abject poverty. After his death, however, many of the fire companies and other organizations to which he had belonged adopted very eulogistic resolutions.

5

THE last of the great conflagrations which devastated large areas of New York during the first fifty years of the nineteenth century occurred on July 19, 1845. The fire started in the sperm oil store of J. L. Van Doren, at No. 34 New Street, and raged fiercely for more than twelve hours, destroying two hundred buildings in Broadway and Exchange Place, and in New, Broad, Wall, Whitehall, and Stone Streets. Four firemen were killed. The most remarkable incident of the fire was the extraordinary escape of Francis Hart, Jr., a member of Engine Company No. 22. Hart was on the roof of the storage warehouse of Crooker & Warren, in Broad Street, which contained a large quantity of saltpetre. Ten minutes after the building had caught fire the saltpetre exploded, shattering a million panes of glass throughout the city and rocking Manhattan Island, Brooklyn and Jersey City as if an earthquake had occurred. The noise was heard as far away as Sandy Hook. The blast lifted the section of roof on which Hart was standing and carried it across Broad Street, depositing it intact atop another building. Except for a dislocated ankle, Hart was uninjured, but the shock of flying through the air on a piece of roofing, like Prince Houssain on the Magic Carpet, kept him in bed for several days.

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

I

ONE OF THE most notable traits of the old-time volunteer fireman was the great affection, amounting almost to worship, in which he held his engine, hose cart, or hook and ladder truck. The heavy and cumbersome machine over which he bent his weary back and strained his aching muscles, and with which he risked his life without recompense, was the veritable apple of his eye. Especially was this true of a member of an engine company, for more than any other type of fire-fighting apparatus an engine possessed a definite personality. Moreover, it was mechanically temperamental, and developed innumerable peculiarities which made it seem very human and alive. To a fireman an engine or a hose cart was always feminine; he invariably spoke of it as "the old gal" and often addressed it in endearing terms. It was not unusual to see a jubilant fire laddie publicly kiss his machine, and embrace as much of it as his arms would surround, after it had worsted a rival in fair contest, or had performed some other noteworthy feat.

As a lover proves his admiration for his lady by presenting her with baubles for the embellishment of her charming person, so did the fireman express his adoration for his engine in terms of paint; and the more he loved the machine the greater was his desire to ornament it with brightly-colored pictures of his own selection. So insistent, indeed, were the firemen upon the right to paint their own engines

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

and hose carts to suit themselves that it soon became customary for the city authorities, on delivering a new machine, to paint it a temporary dull gray or other neutral color, leaving the question of permanent decoration — and the task of paying for it — to the particular company to which the apparatus had been assigned. And to the firemen the matter was one of extraordinary importance. Special committees were appointed to consider various color combinations and to make arrangements with an artist, and their reports were subjected to almost endless debate. Sometimes months elapsed before obdurate firemen would abandon their personal preferences, and the attitude assumed by a member of Engine Company No. 3, long cited as a classic example of the fireman's viewpoint, was not uncommon. Having received a new engine in the winter of 1820, the men of No. 3 held a special meeting at the Tea-Water Tavern, opposite the old Tea-Water Pump in Chatham Street, where the matter of decorating the machine was discussed over great bowls of steaming punch. The Tea-Water Pump had that day been given a new coat of pea-green, and one of the firemen was greatly impressed by the striking contrast between the white snow and the bright green of the paint. He listened to the reports of the various committees, meanwhile industriously imbibing punch, and finally he arose and said with great gravity:

"I don't care a damn, fellers, what color yer paint the old gal, if yer'll only listen to me and paint her green!"

He sank back in his chair and slumbered, rousing every few moments to shout, "Paint the old gal green!" His advice was not followed, but his phrase caught the fancy of the firemen, and thereafter when they extinguished a fire they boasted that they had painted it green, an expression which is still used occasionally by modern firemen. And the company poet, after much travail, composed a ditty which the men of No. 3 sang as they rolled home from a fire:

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

*We're coming back rejoicing,
The liveliest boys you've seen;
We've beat them other fellers,
At the fire we painted green.*

A few months later, however, three small fires occurred within twenty-four hours, and at all of them No. 3 was last on the scene. At two she even arrived too late to get into action. There was great rejoicing among the other companies, and some unknown genius produced a poem commemorating No. 3's failure to make good her boast, which was sung in every engine house in New York:

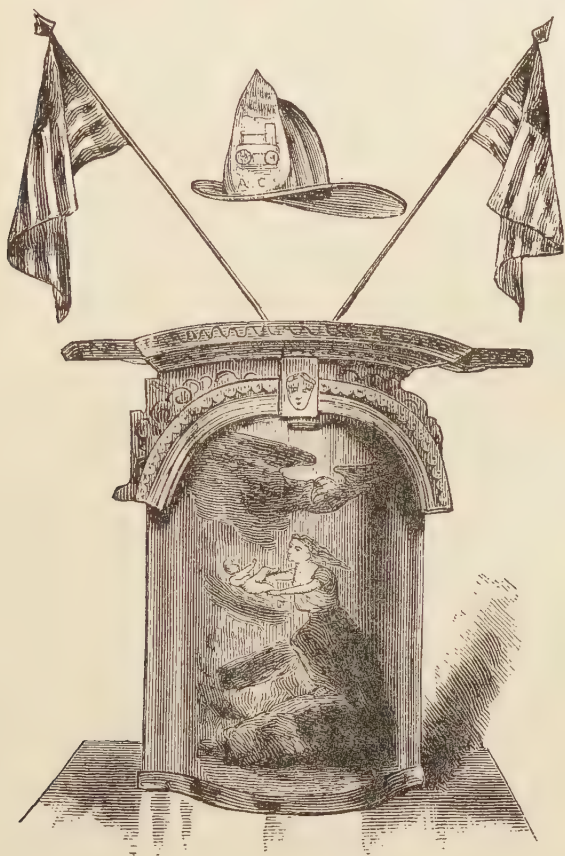
*There is an engine house,
Not far away;
Where they're last at fires,
Three times a day.*

*Oh, how the boys all scream,
When they see Three's put on steam,
For the fires they can't paint green,
Three times a day.¹*

Because of their construction the old engine and hose carts, with wide panels and backs and a considerable extent of surface, lent themselves admirably to decorative schemes, even when conceived on a grand scale; and until the formation of the paid fire department and the introduction of steam engines, which made fire-fighting more of a business and less of a romantic adventure, they were the gaudiest vehicles in Christendom. Many of the finest decorations were not painted upon the engine or hose cart proper, but were emblazoned on false backs, of various fine woods and very heavy, which were attached to the machines only for parades and other exhibitions. They were in great demand as souvenirs when the volunteer companies were disbanded, but most of them were retained by the veteran fireman organizations. In time it became the custom to present them

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to expectant fathers, who made them into cradles. The finest of all the ornamented backs is said to have been that of Columbian Engine No. 14, on which the artist J. Quidor, about 1850, painted the portrait of an Indian chieftain and



An Engine Back

his squaw, against an appropriate background of forest. It was of solid mahogany, and with the picture cost nearly one thousand dollars, all of which was subscribed by the members of the company. Peter Ottignon, better known as

the Jolly Butcher, who was Foreman at the time, enjoyed a considerable renown as a fighter. Soon after the painting had been completed he led his men in an attack upon a rival company, and to punish No. 14 the Fire and Water Committee of the Common Council suspended the entire membership and ordered the engine removed to the Corporation Yard—the greatest disgrace that could befall a company. When a city truck arrived to haul away the machine, however, Quidor's masterpiece had vanished, and the firemen professed ignorance of its whereabouts. Detectives tried to find it, but while they searched New York the painting was travelling across the Atlantic Ocean on a packet of which Jim Lyons, a member of No. 14, was mate. By the time Lyons' ship returned to the United States the company had been reinstated, and the painting was again installed on the engine.

2

THE practice of ornamenting fire engines and hose carts, from which came the common expression "all dressed up like a fire engine," was begun in 1796, when a wreath of roses was painted on the back and panels of No. 15, which was thereafter known as Old Wreath of Roses. Within the next fifty years the custom had become so popular that some of the foremost artists of the day were frequently called upon to exercise their talent upon the machines. William H. Philp, a famous portrait painter, celebrated his election as a member of Hose Company No. 3 in 1850 by painting the Battle of Bunker Hill on one side of the cart and Washington at the Battle of Monmouth on the other, enclosing each picture in a highly decorative frame of entwined flowers.² Henry Inman likewise decorated several engines and hose carts, as well as many of the large silken banners which were carried in the parades. Other noted artists who worked for the fire companies at various times were

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

John Quigg, Joseph H. Johnson and A. P. Moriarty, popularly called Professor Moriarty, who specialized in landscapes. Johnson also painted the great banner, ten feet by twelve, which the city presented to the fire department in



Painting on back of Engine

1858. He charged one thousand five hundred dollars for the job. The banner had a blue front and a scarlet back, with heavy gold mountings and flambeaux on either side, and a massive golden eagle poised at the top. The design represented Benevolence and Protection, surrounded by emblems of the department.

The members of Engine Company No. 13 had the brass

work of their engine silver plated in 1830 at a cost of eight hundred dollars, and the machine itself was painted a glossy black. On the back was a large picture of Jupiter hurling thunderbolts. Soon afterward Hope Engine No. 31 appeared on the streets with gold figures embedded in its sides. On the back of Oceanus Engine No. 11 was a painting of the Burning of Troy, and No. 32 proudly displayed a picture of Bunker Hill Monument. The firemen of No. 5 ornamented their engine, the famous Honey Bee, with a painting of Hercules Slaying the Lion, and the Jefferson Engine Company No. 26 struck a patriotic note with a full length portrait of Thomas Jefferson signing the Declaration of Independence. One of the most highly decorated engines of the period that immediately preceded the disbanding of the volunteers was Niagara No. 4. This company received a new piano machine in 1849, and employed several artists to decorate it. They more than did so. The box was painted white and trimmed with gold, with a delicate shadow, while the wheels were blue and gilt, and the levers blue. The whole was tastefully ornamented with scrolls in great profusion, and all the carved work was inlaid with solid gold. On the condenser case were two mottoes etched in gold, "Duty Our Pleasure" and "Ever Ready, Ever Willing," and five paintings, one of a volcano at sea and four of Niagara Falls as seen from various points. On the mahogany back was a picture of a prairie fire.

Of the hose carts, perhaps the most lavishly decorated was the elegant vehicle rolled by Columbian Hose Company No. 9, sometimes called the Silk Stocking Company. Because of its silver-plated tongue, lamps, springs and other metal fittings, the cart was popularly known as Old Silver Nine, and when it whirled through the streets its admirers set up a cry of "Come, Ye Old Silver Nine!" Professor Moriarty was commissioned to paint and ornament the carriage, and was instructed by a special committee to go the

limit. Apparently he did so. The body of the machine was a rich plum color, and the running gear was brown, with gold, red and white stripes. Two paintings were emblazoned upon the hose reel. On the right panel was a handsome design entitled *The Guardian Angel*, in which two angels hovered over a slumbering child; and on the left panel the Professor had spread himself on a picture labelled *Repose*, which depicted a group of lazy females lounging under a cluster of shade trees. A silver rim encircled each picture, and on the outer edge of the reel was rich carved work, inlaid with gold and silver. On the front box was a large silver plate with the name of the company engraved upon it, and on the back box a painting of the Firemen's Monument in Greenwood Cemetery, with the motto, "We Cherish Their Memory." Two carved dolphins, richly gilded, were beneath the boxes, and on each of the side panels was a large silver 9. The lifters, part of the mechanism for raising the hose reel, represented a boy shooting marbles. And on the lid of the front box was this inscription in silver lettering:

*They who steal our purse steal trash;
But they who basely steal our books, torches, etc.,
Rob us most villainously.*

The supremacy of Old Silver Nine was challenged in 1850, when Lafayette Hose Company No. 4, later called Marion, received a new cart on which the decorators had performed prodigies of ornamentation. The running gear was painted ultra-marine, the boxes and arch were purple, the hose reel was carmine with richly gilded carving, and the wheels were striped with broad bands of red and gold. Nor was that all. The tongue and most of the metal fittings were silver-plated, on each side of the reel was a silver shield bearing the number of the company in Roman numerals, and on the front two golden figures upheld a similar shield. On the front box was a painting called the Spirit of

'76, which showed the interior of a farmhouse, with a stalwart young American bidding goodbye to his parents before rushing to the aid of General Washington. The rear box was brilliant with a picture of General Marion's camp fire, before which stood the American offering a British officer a platter of sweet potatoes. Illustrations of Washington Irving's story of Rip Van Winkle decorated the side and rear panels, both showing old Rip when he returned to his native village after his long slumber, clad in rags and carrying an ancient fire-lock. Another gaudy cart which was put into service about a year after No. 4's new machine had first startled New York was that rolled by Mazeppa Hose Company No. 42. Professor Moriarty painted the Mazeppa machine in such a superior fashion that he received a gold medal at the Castle Garden Fair in 1851, when it was exhibited. The boxes and upper works were a dark plum color striped with gold and edged with a fine blossom stripe, and the gilding was connected at the corners by ornamental scrolls. The wheels and running gear were carmine striped heavily with gold, and relieved by broad bands of delicate lilac. The back and front plates of the running mechanism were further ornamented by golden scrolls richly carved. On the back and the panels of the hose reel were pictures of Hope, of Washington's camp at Valley Forge, of several incidents in the story of Mazeppa, of a fireman standing at a hydrant, of the city's coat of arms, and of the Institution for the Blind.

The firemen of Mechanics' Own Hose Company No. 42, which was organized by shipbuilders and foundrymen and named for a famous clipper ship which they had helped to build, employed John Quigg to ornament their hose cart with nautical scenes, including pictures of the clipper *Contest* and the yacht *America*. The cart rolled by Rutgers Hose Company No. 26 was wildly decorated with sea horses, scrolls, shields, sketches of ladies peering through lattice,

and portraits of Colonel Henry Rutgers, member of a pioneer New York family. On the front box was the company's motto, "The noblest motive is the public good." Mohawk Hose Company No. 39 operated a machine which had been painted by Professor Moriarty at the height of his inspiration. The running gear was a light cream color, the boxes and arch were blue, and the reel was red with gold stripes. One panel bore a painting of Neptune, and the other, as described by a contemporary historian, "a fancy sketch of a female."

The most expensive hose cart in the old volunteer department was that of Amity Company No. 38. The members of this organization were all wealthy men, and socially were somewhat snooty, never engaging in contests or street brawls. They refused to accept a cart of the type usually provided by the city, but ran their own machine, which cost eight thousand dollars to build and one thousand five hundred dollars to decorate. It was of hard wood, and was painted snow white, with heavy silver plate over all the fittings, and red lamps shaped like pineapples and mounted in solid gold. Another cart that cost more than usual was that rolled by Oceana Hose Company No. 36.³ The members of this organization paid almost two thousand dollars for their machine and its embellishments. One panel of the cart displayed a representation of Oceana and her nymphs arising from the sea, and the other was covered by pictures of High Bridge and a group of Indians. Scattered hither and yon over the body of the cart were paintings of a little boy playing a hose, of the City Hall Park and Bowling Green Fountains, and of a little girl washing her feet at a hydrant. Oceana's firemen were mostly merchants and clerks, and because of their occupations were known as Quills. They were much more adept at writing than most of the other firemen, and their company minutes and committee reports were plentifully sprinkled with fancy language.

Thus, on July 11, 1860, they adopted this resolution providing for the purchase of a small but necessary article of furniture:

Whereas, *The refulgent rays of the great celestial luminary, during the present epoch, are converting this quarter of our globe into an immense hypocaust, whereby the sojourners become unduly surcharged with caloric; and*

Whereas, *Our present receptacle of frigorific aqueous fluid, owing to its venerableness, has passed into an irremediable state of decay, rendering it utterly incompetent of fulfilling any longer the destiny for which it was intended; and*

Whereas, *We are convinced that such a receptacle is extremely necessary for the proper maintenance of our corporal welfare, as the partaking of its contents serves in counterbalancing and equilibrating the aforesaid caloric; therefore*

Resolved, *That our Foreman be empowered to get us a new water-cooler at his earliest convenience.*

Once an engine or a hose cart had been decorated to the satisfaction of the firemen it was hauled very ceremoniously to the company house under the supervision of a special committee, and there placed on exhibition for several hours, during which time all alarms of fire were ignored. A great deal of interest was always shown, and the reactions of the visitors, together with appropriate comment upon the appearance of the machine, were carefully recorded, though not always with extreme modesty. "This morning," wrote the Secretary of Engine Company No. 13 on December 2, 1829, "most of the members met at the Corporation Yard for the purpose of taking our new Engine to the House. We received her about 11 o'Clock, & from that time until dark we received visitors at the Engine House. Hundreds of persons called in the course of the day, & appeared much pleased with their visit—indeed, for splendor & magnificence, both as regards her Painting, Gilding, Plating & Carving, she never will, probably, be equalled."

Whenever a fire company gave a dance or a chowder

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

party, admission to which was by ticket of extraordinary ornamentation, the engine or hose cart was installed in the center of the floor, and the false mahogany back formed the central point, and determined the color scheme, of the decorations. The most elaborately painted machines were also displayed at the Firemen's Ball—an important annual so-



Ticket to the Firemen's Ball

cial function for which Theodore Thomas and orchestra occasionally provided music—and were often sent to other cities for exhibition. On such tours the machines were escorted by their crews in full uniform and, when a company could afford the expense, by Dodworth's famous band. Frequently the companies had their apparatus specially decorated for the parades, and for the torch-light processions in which they particularly loved to march they added such appropriate and thrilling effects as calcium lights, rockets, colored lamps, reflectors, Roman candles, and wild animals. Engine No. 5, old Honey Bee, always rolled in a night pageant with an illuminated bee-hive swung between her

brakes, and Eagle Hook and Ladder Company No. 4, better known as the Golden Four, invariably exhibited a live wild eagle chained to the ladders. Perhaps the greatest of the torch-light processions was that held in honor of the Prince of Wales on October 13, 1860, when six thousand uniformed firemen, each of whom carried a blazing torch, passed in review before the heir to the British throne as he stood on the balcony of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Each company, as it reached the hotel, stopped for an instant and loosed a resounding cheer, to which the Prince responded by touching his august hat, while a smile of delight and appreciation curved the royal lips. Another member of the British Royal Family, Prince Arthur, was also entertained by the New York firemen some ten years later. He attended the department's forty-first annual ball at the Academy of Music on January 31, 1870, and throughout one dance stood in a proscenium box bowing and kissing his hand. Then he descended to the floor and took part in the promenade, whereat Grafulla's orchestra played "Love Among the Roses."

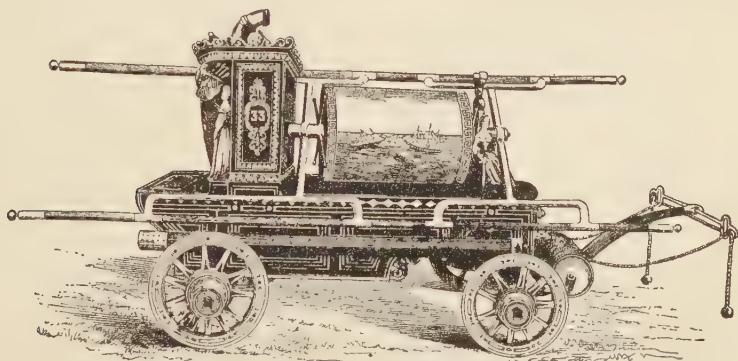
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WHEN a fire engine or a hose cart was assigned to a company and officially put in service, the men who ran with it held a special meeting and solemnly christened their new darling, usually with some such patriotic or historical name as Hudson, Washington, Lafayette, Clinton, Fulton, Columbian, Franklin, Rutgers, etc. However, there were exceptions to the rule, for sometimes the firemen named their machines in honor of famous fire heroes or other public figures, or to commemorate events of great interest. For example, when, on June 14, 1849, the celebrated racing mare Lady Suffolk trotted a mile in the then remarkable time of 2:26, the name of Atlantic Hose Company No. 14 was promptly changed to Lady Suffolk, and pictures of the

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

trotter were painted on the panels of the cart, while a new weather vane, carved to resemble the mare in action, was erected atop the company house with suitable ceremonies. Fashion Hose Company No. 25 was also named for a famous race horse of about the same period. The lifters of Fashion's hose reel represented a horse's head, the jaws of which opened when the lids were raised. Croton Engine Company No. 16 was so designated in honor of the opening of the Croton Aqueduct; and Pocahontas Engine No. 49, which was organized in Harlem after the Great Fire of 1835, took its name, not from the Indian maiden who rescued Captain John Smith, but from the Pocahontas Dairy operated by Gouverneur Morris.

The name of Black Joke Engine No. 33, one of the most famous machines of the old department, commemo-



Black Joke Engine

rated the valiant deeds performed during the War of 1812 by a privateer, an Albany sloop. When No. 33 was organized in 1807 the company ran an engine called Old Bombazula, which was handsomely decorated with pictures of the Three Graces. Old Bombazula was burned at a shipyard fire in 1824, and when the question of naming a new engine arose a descendant of the Gouverneur family, who lived at

Henry and Gouverneur Streets, offered the firemen a golden trumpet if they would call the machine Lady Gouverneur. But when a vote was taken Black Joke won by an overwhelming majority. An artist who had been commissioned to decorate the engine painted it a shiny black with gold stripes, and on the box emblazoned a picture of the privateer capturing a merchantman. The first Foreman of Black Joke was James P. Allaire, member of an old New York family which owned the boiler and iron foundry wherein was built the boiler of the *Savannah*, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Allaire was succeeded in 1832 by Malachi Fallon, who soon made the engine company a considerable power in politics, despite the regulations of the fire department which prohibited the fireman from participating in such activities. Fallon also commanded two independent military companies, the Baxter Blues, so called in honor of a Lieutenant-Colonel who had been killed during the war with Mexico, and for whom Baxter Street was named; and the Black Joke Volunteers, who numbered one thousand men, fully armed and equipped and uniformed in red shirts, black trousers and leggings, and glazed caps. Through his political connections Fallon became Warden of the Tombs during the early eighteen forties, and later opened the Ivy Green, a notorious saloon which was a popular rendezvous for politicians.

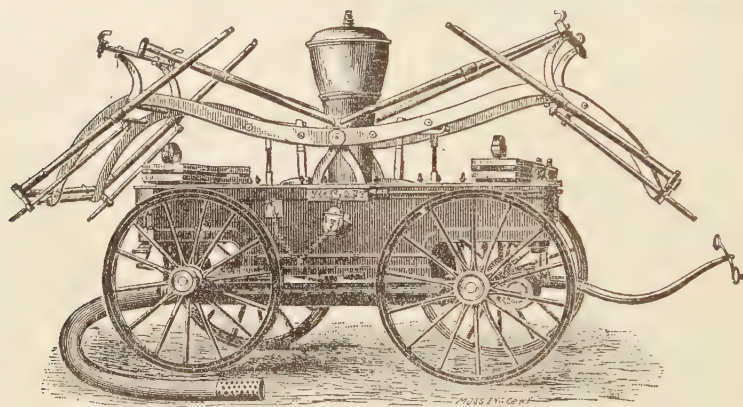
The firemen who ran with Black Joke were noted street brawlers, and engaged in many combats with other fire organizations under the leadership of Fallon and of Tom Hyer, the prize-fighter, who was a member of the company for many years. In 1843 Black Joke's enemies announced their intention of demolishing the golden eagle with which the gable of No. 33's engine house was ornamented, and late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve they marched several hundred strong down Gouverneur Street and rushed toward the building, brandishing clubs and brick-

bats. But they quickly retreated when the crew of No. 33 opened the door and displayed the ugly muzzle of a howitzer which had been loaded with slugs, chains and bolts. The Black Joke firemen threatened to shoot if any attempt was made upon their eagle, and the invaders turned their attention to Samuel Dunlop's Ten-to-One Tavern across the street, a favorite resort of No. 33's men, none of whom had succumbed to the blandishments of the teetotalers. A Black Joke marksman stationed on the roof fired a musket, but his aim was poor and the bullet went through the window of a near-by residence, barely passing over the nose of a man lying in bed. The shot attracted the police, who dispersed the crowd and collected thirteen muskets, half a dozen pistols, and a great pile of paving blocks, from the roof of the tavern. They also confiscated the howitzer and arrested several members of the Black Joke Company, who were soon released by their political friends. A few months later, in 1843, Fallon ordered the company to march, with the engine, in a great demonstration for James K. Polk and George M. Dallas, the Democratic candidates for President and Vice-President. The firemen paraded in full uniform behind the Black Joke Volunteers and the Baxter Blues, and their machine was exhibited on a float drawn by four milk-white horses. This was too flagrant a violation of the departmental rules for even the politicians to countenance, and at the next meeting of the Common Council the Black Joke Company was disbanded and the engine hauled to the Corporation Yard. Fallon went to California in 1849, soon after gold had been discovered there, and became Chief of Police of San Francisco, resigning when the Vigilance Committee was formed. In 1852 a second Black Joke Company was organized by Peter Masterson, later an Alderman and a member of the Legislature, and was located in a small shed adjoining Masterson's residence in Fifty-eighth Street. Many members of the old company

joined the new organization and sustained Black Joke's ancient reputation for brawling. In 1863, two years before the volunteer fire department went out of existence, they achieved considerable local fame by committing the first overt act in the Draft Riots, wrecking a Provost Marshal's office at Third Avenue and Forty-sixth Street and demolishing a wheel from which the names of several of their friends had been drawn for military service.

4

AFTER a fire company had appeared at a few fires it usually received a sobriquet, either because of the peculiarities of the engine or hose cart, or those of the men who manned



American Fire Engine, 1857

the machine, by which it was popularly known. Sometimes the nick-name was applied to the apparatus alone, and sometimes to the company also. Empire Engine No. 42 was called Old Hay-Wagon and Man-Killer because of its ungainly appearance and the fact that strong men were required to operate it; and the members of the first engine company organized in New York, Hudson No. 1, which ran one of the machines imported from London in 1731, were

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known as Hayseeds for many years because one of their early houses was in the middle of a hay-field, at the end of a lane which ran through the old Reynolds farm. The lane is now Barclay Street. The firemen of Jefferson Engine Company No. 26 wore blue uniforms and had the body of their machine painted the same color, so they were called Blue Boys, and the engine Old Blue Box. They were very proud of these designations, and when they rolled through the streets or worked at the brakes they shouted in unison, "True Blue Never Fades!" Neptune Engine Company No. 6, which was organized in 1765 and disbanded eighty-one years later for fighting, was known as Bean Soup because that was the favorite refreshment of its members, and the men of Union Engine Company No. 18 were called Shad Bellies—their engine hose was near the fish markets in Water Street. The firemen of Liberty Engine Company No. 50 provided their own nickname of The Dashing Half Hundred, and the men of Engine No. 7 officially designated their machine Old Sal, in honor of an old Negro woman named Sal Harvey, who once discovered a fire, roused several of the crew of No. 7, and then helped drag the engine through a deep snow. Engine No. 28 was called the Arsenal because it was popularly supposed to be kept filled with revolvers when not in actual fire service, and Engine No. 29 was variously known as Old Jeff and the Iron Horse, while the men who ran it were called Rooster Boys. Eagle Hose Company No. 1 earned its sobriquet of Mutton Hose in 1847. Its members, feasting on hot mutton pies in a Madison Street ale-house when an alarm was rung, appeared at the fire clutching pies in their hands, and refused to connect their hose to a hydrant until they had eaten. However, they were not reprimanded, for in the New York of the eighteen forties hot mutton pies were regarded as the greatest of culinary triumphs, which not even a fireman could be expected to abandon untasted. They were served in

all restaurants and taverns, and the newspapers and magazines frequently published poems and the articles extravagantly praising their flavor and fragrance. One poem, called simply "Hot Mutton Pies," was set to music, and was one of the most popular songs of the period. It was written by Harry Venn, a famous old fire-fighter who was Foreman of Engine Company No. 14 for many years, and who occasionally contributed verse to various periodicals under the *nom de plume* of Lemon Peel:

*I remember, yes, distinctly, as tho' it were to-day,
The pleasures of my early youth that all have passed away;
Some were sad, and some were joyous, yet all of them I prize,
And the dearest of them all to me sweet, sweet Mutton Pies.*

*How grateful was the perfume, when brown and smoking hot,
And their juicy fragrant flavor can never be forgot;
Though the maker of the edible now in the cold grave lies,
His memory I reverence when I think of Mutton Pies.*

*Oh, tell me not of dishes made in French and German style,
And tenderloins and venison that's first laid out to spile;
I pass my hand on all of these — my appetite won't rise
At no such fancy fixin's — I want my Mutton Pies.*

Americus Engine No. 6, because of its number and its unusual size and weight (it was a double-decker and weighed four thousand two hundred pounds) was popularly known as Big Six, an appellation which was subsequently applied to Christy Mathewson, the baseball pitcher, and is now borne by the New York branch of the Typographical Union. This was the company of which William M. (Boss) Tweed⁴ was Foreman, and the engine bore emblazoned on its back the tiger that was later appropriated by Tammany Hall, and which is still the emblem of that great charitable organization. Big Six was organized at a meeting in a printing ink factory in Front Street on December 11, 1848, and

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

for several years was stationed in Gouverneur Street, near Henry Street, in the fine big house formerly occupied by Black Joke. Tweed was present at this meeting, and gave his occupation as chair manufacturer, a trade which had also been followed by his father. The firemen dug out the cellar of the Gouverneur Street building at a cost of two



William M. Tweed

hundred dollars, and there they gave many dinners and parties. Every Saturday night they kept open house, distributing fish, chicken and eel chowder to all comers. The particular enemy of Big Six was Fulton Engine Company No. 21, called the White Ghost in derision by the other firemen because its members had boasted that they could pass any other machine in the department, but never

succeeded in passing any. Big Six and the White Ghost had many races and a few actual fights, and were always very jealous of each other. Once Big Six, at its annual election of officers, added an assistant secretary to its personnel,



Tiger Carried on "Big Six"

and the next day a poet of White Ghost produced a ditty which his fellows roared mightily as they rolled to a fire:

*Number Six has come on deck
With a new assistant sec.,
Do ye mind?
He's as dirty as its water,
Tho' he thinks himself a snorter,
But he really hadn't oughter,
Do ye mind?*

Clinton Engine Company No. 41, which was organized in 1813 and officially named in honor of DeWitt Clinton, was better known as Old Stag, not only because of the picture of

DRESSED UP LIKE A FIRE ENGINE

the great deer painted on its box, but because its members, as they raced through the streets, shouted what they fondly imagined was the cry of a stag at bay. For several years Old Stag occupied a house at Rivington and Arundel (now Clinton) Streets, but later moved to the first floor of a building at Attorney and Delancey Streets. The second floor of the latter structure was the Thirteenth Precinct police station,



Big Six on Parade

commanded by Captain Devoy. Bitter enmity soon developed between the police and the firemen, and finally Captain Devoy ordered Old Stag's men to quit lounging in front of the house, declaring that they annoyed people en route to church. The firemen protested, but the Captain was obdurate and refused to rescind the order. A few weeks later the firemen went on a target excursion to Flushing, Long Island, and before marching to the boat paraded before the engine house bearing the target at which they proposed to

shoot. It was a life-sized portrait of Captain Devoy, with his heart outlined in white on his uniform coat. Above the picture was a large shield on which was the inscription:

*From thy heart the blood shall run
From the bullets of Forty-one.*

When the firemen returned that evening they again displayed the target, now riddled with bullet holes from which dripped streams of red paint. They stood before the engine house chanting their couplet until Captain Devoy ordered the police to drive them away. Next day the furious Captain had every member of the company arrested and placed under bonds to keep the peace and cease holding him up to ridicule.

Live Oak Engine No. 44, which was stationed in Houston Street near Lewis Street and was manned principally by shipyard workers, received her nickname of Old Turk in this wise: in 1830 Henry Eckford, an enterprising ship-builder, took several members of the company to Constantinople to work on a contract, and when they returned they were hailed by their friends as Turks. One, named Russell, who had let his hair and whiskers grow and affected a fez, was called Old Turk, and within a few months the sobriquet was generally applied to the entire company, and also to the engine. The firemen were very proud of the name, and on the boxes of their machine carved the figures of two gigantic Turks armed with immense sabres, while behind them, for background and atmosphere, was painted a great cloud thickly populated with languorous Oriental beauties. But on the back of the engine, as a concession to Western taste, was the portrait of a handsome American lady, who wore more clothing than did her sisters of the Orient. Below her was the company's motto in gold, "Extinguish one flame and cherish another."

Old Turk was also known as the Singing Engine, because

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of the great profusion of vocal artists among the men who manned her brakes. William H. Webb, the ship-builder,⁵ was an Old Turk fireman and a noted singer, and the company also boasted of an accomplished sextette, composed of the Penny brothers, called Old Turk's Big Pennys. Ordinarily the Pennys sang classical music, but sometimes, when they had mellowed a bit at Johnny Muldoon's tavern at Third and Lewis Streets, where good whiskey could be had for three cents a glass, it pleased them to warble a catchy ditty which was then very popular:

*I went down town to see my posey,
Who did I meet but Jim Along Josey;
Hey, Jim Along, Jim Along Josey,
Hey, Jim Along,
Jim Along Joe.*

The best of Old Turk's singers, however, was Frank Walton, a tall wood-sawyer who was known as the Minstrel Boy of the Saw-pit and as Old Turk's Mocking Bird. Later he went to California and died in the gold-fields. Walton always performed at the social functions given by his company, usually singing "Hunt the Buffalo; or, On the Banks of the Pleasant Ohio." It had innumerable stanzas, three of which, and the chorus, follow:

*Come all ye likely lads that have a mind for to range,
Into some foreign country your situation to change;
In seeking some new pleasures we will all together go,
And we'll settle on the banks of the pleasant Ohio.*

Chorus

*And we'll range through the wild woods and hunt the buffalo;
And we'll range through the wild woods and hunt the buffalo.
All ye girls of New England who are unmarried yet,
Come along with us and rewarded you shall get;
For there is all kinds of game, besides the buck and doe,
And we'll range through the wild woods and hunt the buffalo.*

YE OLDE FIRE LADDIES

*To sit down to your wheels, girls, it will do you no harm,
To spin yourselves some clothing to keep yourselves warm;
If you card and spin, girls, we will plow, reap and sow,
When we settle on the banks of the pleasant Ohio.*

*If by chance the wild Indians should happen to come near,
We'll all unite together with heart and with cheer;
We'll march through the town, boys, and strike a deadly blow,
And we'll drive them from the banks of the pleasant Ohio.*

But the most famous of all the Old Turks, whose name even yet awakens fond memories within the breasts of the few remaining old-time firemen, was Frank Clark, whose hour of greatest triumph came when he led the company in President Pierce's inaugural parade in 1853. Clark joined No. 44 as a runner when he was but eleven years old, and bunked with the other followers of the company in Houston Street. One night the Foreman, Sam Allen, offered a new suit of clothing to the first runner who responded to the next night alarm. The embryo firemen went to bed with their trousers stuck inside their boots, ready to jump at the slightest sound. But when at midnight an alarm was rung and they rushed across the street, they found Clark standing beside the tongue of the engine waiting for them. He had solved the problem of being first by answering the alarm naked.

Clark became Foreman of Old Turk about 1847, and a year later he was married. After the ceremony he and his bride started for their new home, and were within a few feet of the door when the fire bell rang. Clark immediately abandoned his wife, dashed to the engine house and led Old Turk to the fire in his wedding suit. He did not see Mrs. Clark again for three days, and she, not having a key to the house, was compelled to return to the home of her parents. When Clark was chided for his unusual conduct he replied:

"What wus a feller goin' to do? Let the old gal get passed?"

SOME FAMOUS BRAWLS

I

BY COMMON usage among the old volunteer firemen the word engine became en-jine, and a man was never said to be a member of a fire company, but to "run with the masheen." An engine of unusual weight and power was called a bull en-jine, an expression which the darkies who delighted to see the apparatus careering through the streets corrupted to bull-jine. A fire engine is said to have first been so designated about 1815 by Molly Aymar, an ancient Nigger who belonged to John Aymar, a wealthy merchant and the last man in New York to abandon the traditional dress of the Knickerbockers—long-tailed coat, knee breeches, silver shoe-buckles, stock and ruffled shirt, and the inevitable queue. Aymar's son, Benjamin, was a member of Oceanus Engine Company No. 11, and old Molly became a sort of unofficial assistant to the steward. Whenever a fire occurred she always awaited the returning firemen at the engine house with a bucket of hot coffee, and whatever food was available from her master's larder. Occasionally, when there was need of additional power because of a heavy snow or rainfall, old Molly hauled at the drag-rope and helped pull the engine to the fire. She was very proud of her connection with the company, and boasted that she always ran "wid dat ole bull-jine."

No fireman would ever admit that his own engine was not a bull-jine, and if necessary he resorted to his fists to

impress an appreciation of its worth upon scoffers. Out of this pride of possession, and the natural desire to be first, grew the feuds, jealousies, and brawls which kept the department in an uproar from the importation of the two original New York fire engines from London in 1731 to the disbanding of the volunteers in 1865. The rivalries of the firemen were at their height during the great riot era of 1830-1850, when New York was so torn by election and abolition disturbances, and outbreaks by the criminal gangs of the Bowery and the Five Points, that soldiers were frequently called upon to suppress the rioters, who dispersed only when they heard the rumble of artillery and saw the gleam of bayonets. Scarcely a fire occurred at which there were not several fights between rival companies, and there is no record of an alarm that was not enlivened by clashes between the runners. Fierce combats began simply because an engine or a hose company had beaten another to the scene of action, or had usurped the only handy fire-plug. During the summer months, and occasionally even in winter, the firemen posted lines of sentinels from the nearest alarm stations to their company headquarters, and when an alarm came it was relayed down the line. Once the news of a fire and its location had reached a house, special groups of fighting men were rushed ahead to capture a fire hydrant or a cistern, and defend it against other companies until their machine arrived. One of the members of such an advance force wore no uniform, but carried a small barrel, which he popped over a hydrant. He then sat nonchalantly upon it, while his mates lurked in nearby doorways ready to assist him, and scouts of rival companies scurried about searching for the fire plug. When the engine or hose cart arrived, the barrel was tipped over and the hose attached to the hydrant, and a great shout of victory arose as the water was played upon the fire, or, as often happened in the exuberance of the moment, upon the other firemen. Occasionally at night, when the city was not

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very well lighted, the hydrant hunters made ludicrous mistakes, and mistook all sorts of objects for fire-plugs. Once Lady Suffolk Hose Company No. 14¹ fought for two hours with another company for possession of what had seemed



Hiding a Hydrant

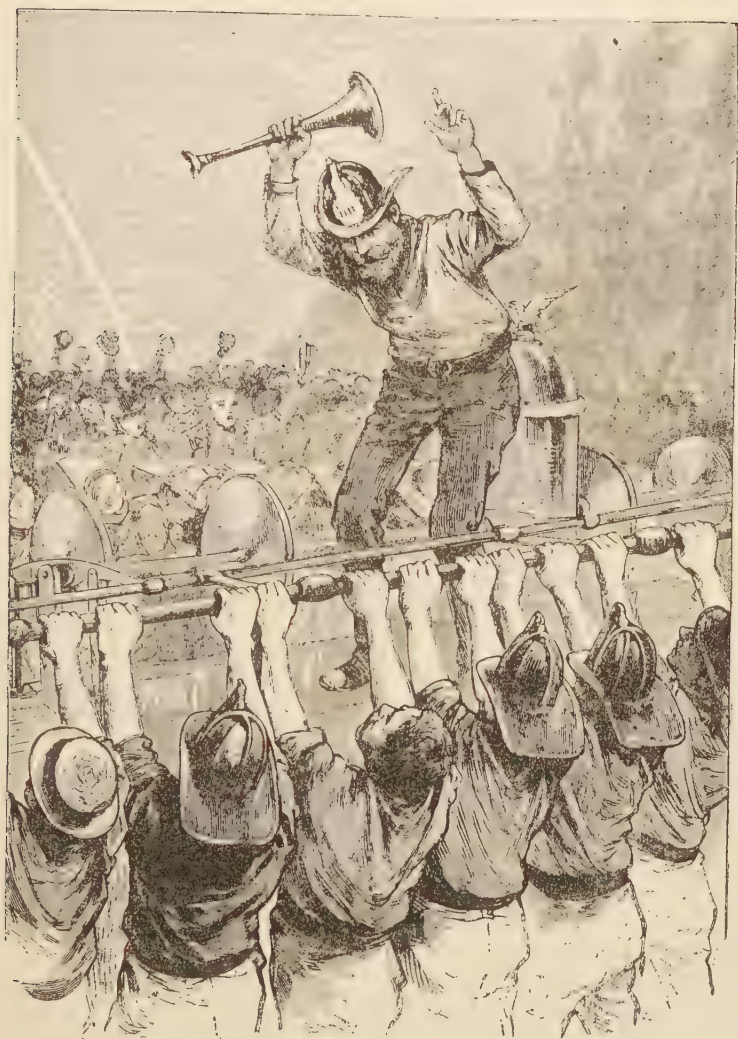
to be a hydrant, but which proved to be the end of a half-buried old cannon. Quite often the firemen devoted more time to fighting for fire-plugs than to extinguishing the flames.

The fire companies not only fought each other whenever an opportunity offered, but they were in almost constant conflict with the many clubs of desperate fighting men which infested New York for many years before the Civil War. Practically all of these bullies enjoyed the protection of Tammany politicians, who employed them as repeaters at elections, and to drive honest citizens away from the polls. "These clubs," said Chief Engineer Alfred Carson in his annual report for 1850, "make deliberate and bloody attacks on our firemen while going to and returning from fires,

destroying the apparatus, and often, by stratagem, putting certain companies in collision with each other, and individual members against each other, and creating in every way endless broil and confusion in the department. . . . I have had many of these villains arrested for upsetting our engines, cutting the hose, beating our firemen almost to death, etc., but they were no sooner in prison than the captains of police, the aldermen, and judges of police would discharge them, to commit fresh attacks on the firemen the following night. . . . The Old Maid's Boys, a fearful and deadly club, seized Hose No. 14, ran up alongside Hose No. 26, attacked the firemen, upset the carriage, etc., doing considerable damage to the carriage. . . . But why recount these daily outrages when these bloodthirsty creatures are thus encouraged and liberated by aldermen, on whose conscientious watchfulness and unsullied integrity the people rely for the incarceration and severe punishment of these abandoned and heartless fiends?" Chief Carson's diatribe had scant effect, for ten years later the hoodlums were still attacking the firemen and damaging fire apparatus. On October 15, 1860, while six members of Lafayette Engine Company No. 19 were trying to drag their machine to a fire, they were set upon by more than a hundred rowdies who lay in wait at Second Avenue and Nineteenth Street and attacked them with stones and brick-bats. One fireman's nose was broken, and two others were even more seriously hurt. They were compelled to abandon their engine, which was upset, smashed and rolled into the gutter, where the paint was burned and scarred with torches.

The principal cause of warfare among the firemen themselves was the washing of one engine by another, which means that the first machine pumped so much water into the second that it overflowed the box, causing irreparable damage to the paint and decorations. Most of the washings occurred at fires, but contests of this sort, together with tests

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Manning the Brakes

for height, force and distance of stream, were frequently held at the Liberty Poles which were scattered in great profusion about the city, and beneath which patriotic exercises were held on the Fourth of July and other holidays. The most important of these contests, and perhaps the only ones that were carried through in a good humor, took place each Thanksgiving afternoon at Riley's famous Pole at Franklin Street and West Broadway. The judges sat on the roof of Riley's Fifth Ward Hotel and Museum, on the southwest corner. Although the engine with the strongest men at the brakes could almost invariably wash another machine of the same type, for an engine to be washed was considered the acme of humiliation, and members of some of the companies whose machines had been so worsted wore mourning bands and flew streamers of crape from their apparatus until the disgrace had been washed out by daring deeds, or by washing other engines. Some took such a calamity even more to heart, as did a member of Black Joke Engine Company No. 33. This old fire-eater contracted tuberculosis from exposure, and the time came when he could no longer answer an alarm. Late one afternoon he heard the ringing of the fire bells, and when a friend, also a member of Black Joke, called a few hours later, he eagerly asked for information about the fire and, above all, about the conduct of No. 33. But for a few moments the friend vouchsafed no word, not even of greeting, but sat gloomily beside the bed. Finally he burst out:

"Oh, Jake! If I could but be in your place this moment, it would be happiness to what I now suffer!"

"What's happened to the en-jine?" demanded the sick man.

"Jake, the en-jine got washed today!"

With a supreme effort Jake raised himself on his pillows.

"Who washed her?" he asked, feebly.

"Twelve en-jine."

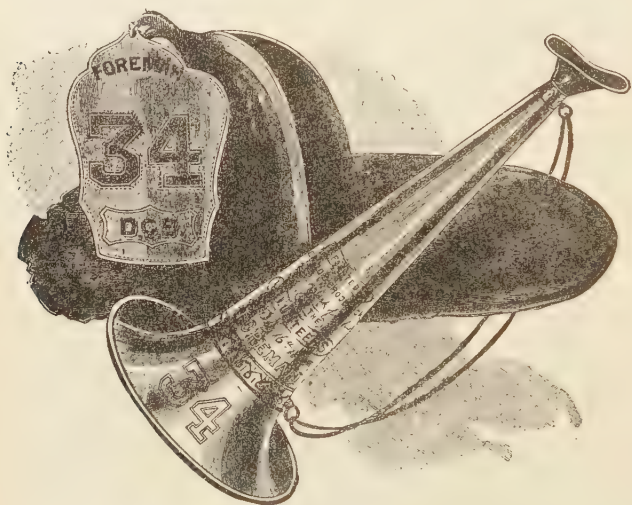
"Then let me die!" cried the invalid. "I envy not your hold on life!"

He sank back, and passed away with the honor of his engine.

One of the most famous brawls of the old volunteer department, traditionally known as The Battle of the Boots, was the direct result of a washing, although it had been brewing for several years. It marked the culmination of a feud which had long absorbed most of the attention of the members and runners of Red Rover Engine Company No. 34, which lay at Hudson and Christopher Streets, and North River Engine Company No. 27, which had its headquarters at Watts and Greenwich Streets. Mike Walsh, journalist, saloon-keeper, gang leader and Tammany heeler, who helped Ned Buntline incite the anti-English riots in Astor Place in 1849; and Butcher Bill Poole, also a Tammany politician and a gangster, who was killed by Lew Baker in 1855, were members of Red Rover; but the company's best fighter was Ely Hazelton, of whom scant record remains excepting a few meager accounts of his fistic prowess. David C. Broderick was Foreman. In later years Broderick went to the Pacific Coast, after he had run for Congress in New York and had been defeated, and became United States Senator from California. He was killed in a duel on September 13, 1859, by David S. Terry, who had been Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, and although he was buried in California, the New York firemen held elaborate funeral ceremonies, with a parade and much eulogistic oratory. Not the least unusual feature was the performance, at the old Bowery Theatre, of a specially written drama called "Three Eras in the Life of a New York Fireman," which was based on incidents in Broderick's career.² The membership of North River included William and Frederick C. Havemeyer, of the noted family of sugar refiners,

and John J. Mount, who had covered himself with glory while a member of Hose Company No. 2, by making a temperance speech during the teetotal campaign of the Washingtonian Battery Against Rum. Mount was also a leading figure in the activities of a small group of bullies called the Butt Enders, whose rendezvous was the Clinton Market at the foot of Spring Street.

The Red Rover and North River companies engaged in many combats in the vicinity of Sweeney's House of Refreshment in Ann Street, a popular resort of the firemen,



Hat and Trumpet of David C. Broderick

and also clashed several times at various special meetings of the Common Council called to investigate their conduct, which they always attended in force, armed with knives, stones, brick-bats and bludgeons. The two companies likewise strove mightily to wash each other's engine, but neither succeeded until the summer of 1842. In July of that year, at a furniture store fire in Van Rynwick (later Renwick) Street near Canal Street, Red Rover pumped into North

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River with such force that the latter engine finally overflowed, whereupon her disgruntled crew vowed vengeance. During a lull in the work of fighting the flames a plan of campaign was arranged, and it was decided to attack Red Rover while both companies were returning to their respective engine houses. Hazelton was chosen to lead the assault, and it was agreed that he was to select a propitious moment for the commencement of hostilities, and to give the signal by shouting "Boots!" About ten o'clock that night, the fire having been extinguished, both companies took up their hose and started homeward. North River lagged behind Red Rover for several blocks, but spurted forward as the latter started to turn a corner into Hudson Street, and soon drew up alongside. Hazelton suddenly shouted "Boots!" and the firemen of North River immediately dropped their rope, drew stones, clubs and brick-bats from their pockets and beneath their coats, and rushed to the conflict. Red Rover's men were taken completely by surprise, and a majority had been unmercifully beaten before they realized fully what had happened. They fought back as best they could, but many had become entangled in the drag-rope and had fallen, and were unable to struggle to their feet because of the press of combatants. The fight raged up and down the street for almost half an hour, with each company using clubs, stones and every other sort of weapon they could find excepting firearms and knives, which were seldom employed by the fighting men of those times. But Red Rover's firemen, out-numbered and out-maneuvered, had slight chance from the beginning, and they finally fled the field, leaving their beloved engine lying on its side in the gutter, its paint scratched and many of its plated fittings ripped away. Several members of both companies had been injured, among them John J. Mount, who had summoned his Butt Enders to the colors of North River. He was struck in the stomach with a barrel stave and badly gashed.

It was customary for the Foreman and his assistants, when a company was returning from a fire, to walk behind the engine and prevent firemen from leaving the drag-rope before the engine had been safely housed. While the fight was in progress Broderick, having stopped to talk to some friends, was several blocks in the rear of Red Rover, and his men had already been defeated and were in full retreat when a panting messenger brought him word of the battle. He immediately started forward at a run, but he had scarcely reached the scene of the disturbance when a North River fighter hit him with a brick and stretched him unconscious on the pavement. Another bully snatched his cap, and it was borne in triumph to North River's engine house, where it was tacked to the flag-pole as a trophy of war. During the late afternoon of the next day Broderick, accompanied by Mike Walsh and other members of the Red Rover Company, went to Joe Orr's Saloon at Greenwich and Desbrosses Streets, where North River's fighting men did most of their serious drinking. There they found Hazelton and a dozen other North River firemen, and Broderick attempted to negotiate for the return of his official headgear. But Hazelton scornfully refused to surrender it, and a fight began when he attempted to peel Broderick's shirt from his back, shouting that it should dangle alongside the cap. Hazelton floored two of the Red Rover emissaries with a beer bottle, and Mike Walsh was dealt such a blow that several fingers on each hand were broken. Broderick was chased from the saloon by a fusillade of bottles, glassware and furniture. He ran down Washington Street, pursued by an infuriated crowd, and sought refuge in Budd's Restaurant. There John J. Mount, on his way home after treatment by a physician, found him dodging among the tables, trying to make his way to a rear exit. Mount promptly stepped to Broderick's side and demanded that the Red Rover Foreman receive fair play. Broderick agreed to fight the entire North River

company one at a time, but after he had whipped three no one else appeared anxious to stand up against his flailing fists, and he was not molested when he left the restaurant. Escorted by Mount, he went to his own saloon at Hudson and Commerce Streets. But his cap remained on the North River flag-pole for several days, until the city authorities ordered it returned to its owner. Several months later, principally on account of the trouble with Red Rover, the North River Company was disbanded. Hazelton eventually met a distressing end. When he could no longer be a fireman he succumbed to the wiles of the Demon Rum, and while on a spree in 1850 he put the point of a shoemaker's awl against his head and drove it into his brain with a mallet.

2

UNTIL a fire engine had been washed it was called a maiden, and a machine which retained its virginity year after year was finally invested with the honorable title of Old Maid, and to all intents and purposes was canonized by the firemen. The most celebrated of the Old Maids, and probably the only New York fire engine that was never washed, was the old goose-neck machine rolled by Engine Company No. 15, which was organized in 1785 and assigned to quarters in Nassau Street opposite Federal Hall, now the Sub-Treasury. The first apparatus used by No. 15 was an old square box engine (the one known as Old Wreath of Roses), but in 1813 the company received a new goose-neck machine and removed to a new house in Chatham Square. Soon afterward the name was changed to Peterson Engine Company, to commemorate the exploits of Foreman William Peterson, who lost his life in the disastrous fire of May 19, 1811, which started in Lawrence's coach factory in Chatham Street (now Park Row), near Duane Street, and destroyed ninety houses. Thereafter, until the company was disbanded in 1849 for participating in a political parade,

Peterson's portrait, appropriately entwined with flowers, decorated the engine, and was emblazoned on a silken banner which was carried in the parades by a special detachment of firemen. After 1830 the company was stationed at No. 49 Chrystie Street.

At the height of the Old Maid's glory, during the eighteen thirties and the early eighteen forties, the company had a larger enrollment of runners than any other fire organization in New York. They were divided into two hostile factions, the Bloods and the Fly-by-Nights, which fought each other, but combined their forces against the runners and firemen of other companies. The champion of the Fly-by-Nights was a well-known character about town named Bill Burke, who was also the oldest of the Old Maid's runners. Burke had lost an arm in the War of 1812, when he served as a sailor aboard an American privateer, but he conceived the idea of putting a stone or a chunk of iron in his armless sleeve, and thereafter he was well-nigh invincible. His brains always appeared to be somewhat addled, and during a big fire in the winter of 1820, which destroyed a dozen frame buildings on the present site of Fulton Market, he became so excited that he pranced about screaming "The whole city is to be burnt!" and "The world is coming to an end!" He finally flung himself head-first into the flames, but was rescued before the fire had done him any greater harm than singe his hair. A few years later some joking firemen induced him to become a candidate for alderman, and he polled so many votes that he almost defeated the regular Tammany nominee. When it was discovered that he would be a dangerous adversary, efforts were made to induce him to withdraw, one of his friends suggesting that he hadn't enough education to be an alderman.

"I've got plenty of education," protested Burke. "I speak the English language scientifically and grammatically. Why, I know the man who made the English language." ³

SOME FAMOUS BRAWLS

The actual membership of the Old Maid was also very large, and included some of the most accomplished brawlers of the period, most of whom had very close connections with Tammany Hall. Among them were Country McCluskey, Sam Skinner, Johnny McCleester; Sam Banta, who went to



Chanfrau as Mose the Bowery B'hoy

California with Yankee Sullivan, the pugilist, and saw Sullivan hanged by the San Francisco Vigilantes; and the four Chanfrau brothers—Frank, Peter, Joseph and Henry, better known as Hen. Frank Chanfrau was an actor, and created the role of *Mose the Bowery B'hoy* in "A Glance at New York," which was produced in 1848 at the old Olympic Theater at No. 444 Broadway. It was the first of the hundreds of folk dramas which have portrayed the varied life of the metropolis. The author, Ben Baker, was a prompter

at the Olympic, and in his early youth was one of the Old Maid's runners. Baker so loved the engine that he often slept curled up under the engine tongue, so that when an alarm came in he could carry the signal lantern. He wrote "A Glance at New York" to pad the bill at his own annual benefit, and so phenomenal was its success (it ran for twelve weeks), that he immediately followed it with half a dozen other plays in which Mose the Bowery B'hoy was the principal character. In all of them Mose was a fireman as well as a bully and a rowdy. They were very popular, and during one season Chanfrau played Mose in two New York theatres and one in Newark on the same night. Many of New York's firemen, however, did not approve of Chanfrau's interpretation of a metropolitan fire laddie, and he was severely criticised by the editor of *America's Own, or; The Fireman's Journal*:

It is ridiculous to attempt to make a part out of such a character as Mose is represented to be. His benevolence, and the clap-trap maneuvers of the stage, are all sham. The effect of this character upon the juveniles who visit the theatre is plainly visible, as they take every opportunity to imitate the character. Its effects upon the Fire Department are serious, in the estimation of those who are not acquainted with its members, as they set every fireman down as a "Mose," degrading to youth.

Baker's plays, which swept Chanfrau into a popularity enjoyed by few other American actors and gave him prosperous acting vehicles for the remainder of his career, were largely based upon the exploits of Moses Humphreys, popularly known as Old Mose, a famous leader of the Bowery B'hoys and a fireman of Lady Washington Engine Company No. 40, the Old Maid's bitterest enemy.⁴ Old Mose was a huge man with a great shock of flaming red hair, and

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was probably the most ferocious street brawler New York has ever produced. If opportunities for fighting did not come to him, he sought them, and what time he was not pulling on the drag-rope of Lady Washington or leading his fellow firemen into battle, he was marching at the head of the



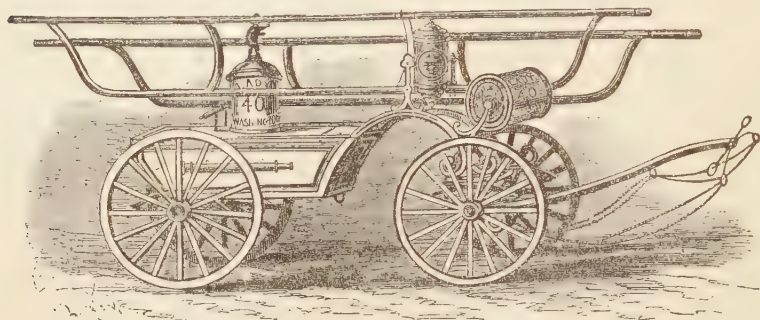
Bowery B'hoys

Bowery B'hoys on marauding and punitive expeditions into the Five Points against the Dead Rabbits, the Roach Guards, the Forty Thieves, the Chichesters and the other gangs which infested the district around Paradise Square. Only one man ever whipped Old Mose, and that man, curiously enough, was Frank Chanfrau's elder brother, Hen.

During the period of enmity between Lady Washington and the Old Maid the former engine lay in Mulberry Street near Broome Street, and the men who manned her brakes were an aggregation of noted fighters. Most of the Bowery

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B'hoys were enlisted among her runners, and the company membership included, besides the mighty Old Mose, a celebrated slugger called Orange County, who wore enormous boots studded with nails with which he stamped his prostrate foes; and Jim Jeroloman, a ship-builder six feet and four inches tall and broad in proportion, who sported earrings that dangled almost to his shoulders. Jerolomon once met



Lady Washington Engine No. 40

Yankee Sullivan in the prize ring, but was easily beaten. He complained afterward that he had been handicapped because eye-gouging, biting, kicking and stamping were forbidden by the rules, and characterized professional pugilism as a pastime for children. Jeroloman also engaged in a famous fight with Jack Teale, Foreman of Tompkins Engine Company No. 30, who was small but pugnacious. Jeroloman, then a member of Old Turk, squirted water over Teale while disconnecting a length of hose, and Teale promptly knocked him down with a wrench. The presence of the Chief Engineer, Handsome Jim Gulick, prevented further hostilities, but the next day Teale and Jeroloman met in a vacant lot in Yorkville, agreeing to fight with their bare fists until one or the other was helpless. They fought evenly for two rounds, but in the third Teale refused to continue, declaring that Jeroloman was biting him. When his

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shirt was removed the imprints of half a dozen of Jeroloman's teeth were found on his shoulder.

The fight in which Old Mose finally met defeat at the hands of Henry Chanfrau, and which developed into one of New York's classic street brawls, occurred on a Sunday afternoon during the summer of 1836, when the rivalry between Old Maid and Lady Washington was at fever heat. Returning from a fire in South Street near Wall Street the two companies, which had been taunting and threatening each other throughout the afternoon, raced up Pearl Street together, on opposite sides of the thoroughfare. Each engine was fully manned and accompanied by a full complement of runners, so that there were about five hundred men and boys at the ropes. The presence of several noted fighters from the Red Rover and Old Turk Engine Companies in the ranks of Lady Washington lent color to the report that the latter intended to attack the Old Maid if opportunity offered, and the firemen were followed by a great crowd which had deserted the ruins of the fire for the more exciting prospect of a fight. The two engines wheeled into Chatham Street, now Park Row, with Old Maid slightly ahead. Lady Washington should have taken a westward course from Chatham Street to her engine house in Mulberry Street, but instead followed the Old Maid to Chatham Square.

There the two companies came abreast, and the firemen resumed their howls and jeers of mutual recrimination, while the crowd yelled madly for the fight to begin. The firemen raced together through Chatham Square, still several yards apart, but as they passed into the Bowery they were forced into collision by the closely pressing crowd. Country McCluskey was at the head of the Old Maid's rope, confronted by the giant Jeroloman of Lady Washington, and at the end of the line Hen Chanfrau found himself face to face with the redoubtable Old Mose. The

foremen, Jack Colloday of Old Maid and John Carlin of Lady Washington, attempted to keep their men moving and to prevent a fight, but as soon as the companies came together Jeroloman put his earrings in his pocket and then jumped at McCluskey's throat, while Old Mose roared ferociously and leaped upon Hen Chanfrau. The next moment the firemen clashed all down the line, and soon a thousand men and boys were kicking, stamping, biting and hitting, while gleeful roars came from the crowd that now packed Chatham Square and surged through the side streets.

The fight swept this way and that, with neither side gaining an advantage, for more than an hour, when Country McCluskey suddenly rushed headfirst upon Jeroloman, butted him in the middle and knocked him down. He thereupon proceeded to stamp upon the prostrate slugger, while the Old Maid's men rushed in with renewed vigor and compelled Lady Washington's champions to give ground. Meanwhile an Old Maid fighter named Freeland was administering a sound thrashing to Orange County, and Henry Chanfrau was nobly holding his own against Old Mose. Throughout the battle Frank Chanfrau, then but twelve years old, had watched eagerly from atop an awning pole in front of Alvord's Hat Store in the Bowery, where he was employed as a clerk. When he saw his brother fighting on even terms with Old Mose he shrieked, his shrill voice rising high above the din of battle:

"Give it to him, Hen! Julia is looking at you from the window!"

Julia was Henry Chanfrau's sweetheart. The mention of her name gave him fresh strength, and he launched a terrific blow that caught Old Mose under the chin and knocked him sprawling on the pavement. Before he could scramble to his feet Chanfrau jumped upon him, and with their greatest fighter being unmercifully beaten, and Jim Jeroloman cringing beneath the stamping boots of Country

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McCluskey, the firemen of Lady Washington turned and fled in disorder, abandoning their engine. Half a dozen were permitted to return an hour later and carry away Old Mose and Jeroloman, but the captured engine, beautifully painted in white and gold, was dragged by the victorious crew of the Old Maid to a pump, and deluged until its handsome decorations had been washed off. Then it was rolled in triumph to Chrystie Street and upset in the gutter near the Old Maid's engine house. Next day John Carlin, Foreman of Lady Washington, was permitted to haul it away at the tail of a cart.

The fight ended hostilities between the Old Maid and Lady Washington, and the latter never wholly survived the humiliation of the crushing defeat. The Bowery B'hoys deserted the company, and many of the best men withdrew. In 1843, after having tried unsuccessfully to regain her proud position, Lady Washington engine was sent to the Corporation Yard and the company was disbanded. Old Mose never again participated in a street brawl, or in any other fight, in New York. He remained in hiding for a week after he had been worsted by Chanfrau, and then took ship for Honolulu, where he opened a saloon and billiard parlor. Later he became an intimate of the King of the Sandwich Islands, who appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Police and Fire Departments. Soon thereafter he married a native woman, and is said to have reared a family of some forty children. Although he never returned to New York, memories of his prowess remained, and as the years rolled by fantastic legends clustered about his gigantic figure, so that in time he took his place alongside of Paul Bunyan and John Henry as one of the great folk-heroes of America. In the lore of the Bowery and of the firemen Old Mose became a giant more than seven feet tall, with hands as large as hams and possessing physical strength only slightly inferior to that of Samson. His knife became a butcher's

cleaver, and his bludgeon an oaken wagon tongue, or a tree which he plucked from the earth with one hand ere he thundered devastatingly into the Five Points to lay waste the rickety tenements wherein lurked the traditional enemies of the Bowery B'hoys. And beside him, on his innumerable adventures and exploits strides the figure of his faithful friend and counsellor, by name Syksey, who first used the word "butt" as a synonym for the remains of a cigar. Syksey was no less legendary, but his prototype was a diminutive runner of Lady Washington, who worshipped Old Mose and followed him wherever he went.

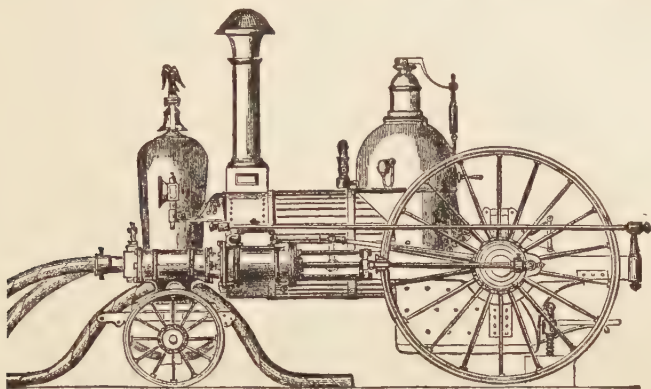
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THE steam fire engine, which compelled the general use of horses and spelled the doom of the Volunteer Fire Department, was introduced into New York by the insurance companies in 1840 when the committee in charge of the Insurance Patrol now the Fire Patrol purchased a steamer which had been designed by Paul Rapsey Hodge, C.E., and built by Hodge & Company at their Laight Street foundry.⁵ The engine was publicly tested in front of City Hall on March 27, 1841, and was accepted by the city after it had thrown ten thousand pounds of water a minute to a height of one hundred and sixty-two feet. It was assigned to Pearl Hose Company No. 28, the members of which bitterly resented their transformation into an engine company.

Hodge's engine was a weird-looking contraption about fourteen feet long, shaped like a locomotive, with huge driving wheels behind. It weighed between seven and eight tons. Two horses were engaged to draw it, but they could not pull the heavy machine up the street inclines, and the firemen could not get the engine to a fire until the company engineer, William Boardman, made it self-propelling by constructing rods to connect the front wheels with the driving wheels. Thus equipped, the engine finally succeeded in

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lumbering to a fire, but the sparks that rolled in great showers from its stack as it clanked and rattled through the streets were about as dangerous as the flames it was expected to extinguish. It was virtually useless for fire-fighting



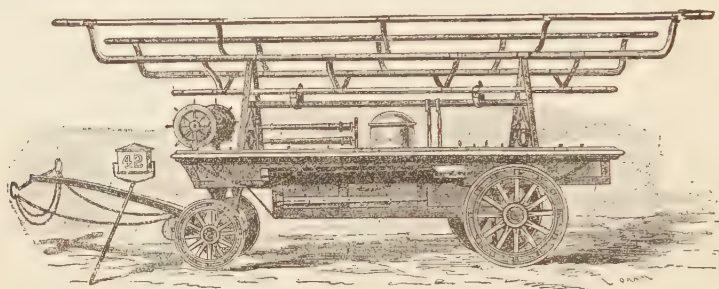
First Steam Fire Engine Built in America, 1840

purposes, for as Chief Engineer Alfred Carson reported to the Common Council in 1841, "it took something like half an hour to get it in operation after reaching the fire, and almost invariably some part of the machinery broke down after being set in motion." Because of these and other faults, but principally through the opposition of the firemen, who pinned their faith to man power at the brakes of a hand engine and resented the invasion of greasy, snorting machinery, the steamer was abandoned. Within a few months it was sold to a packing-box manufacturer, who used it as a stationary engine.

Not until 1855 were steam fire engines again seen in action in New York. Then, impressed by the fact that they were in successful operation throughout Europe and in half a dozen American cities, the Common Council directed the Chief Engineer to investigate the advisability of procuring such machines. His report was favorable, and arrangements were made to test an engine which had been manufactured

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in Cincinnati by A. B. Latta and sent on an exhibition tour of Eastern cities. On February 8, 1855, before several thousand spectators in City Hall Park, the Latta steamer engaged in a trial with Engine No. 42, the largest and most powerful of the hand engines, and commonly known as Old Hay-Wagon. It was manned by the Exempt Engine Company, composed of strong and experienced firemen. The Hay-Wagon dropped her suction into the City Hall cistern



Old Hay-Wagon

and stretched out two hundred feet of hose, and at the same time a match was applied to the kindling wood in the steamer's fire-box. In eight and one-half minutes the steam engine began to pump and discharge water through two large suctions. Then both machines threw streams toward Beekman Street. The water of Old Hay-Wagon sprinkled the pavement one hundred and eighty-nine feet away, but the best the steamer could do was one hundred and eighty-two feet.

On the second trial the hand engine threw a stream more than two hundred feet, beating the steamer by fifteen feet. The third trial was for height. Each company hoisted one hundred and fifty feet of hose to the roof of City Hall, and the pipes were pointed toward the figure of Justice on the cupola. While thousands cheered, the lusty New Yorkers with their hand engine forced water high above the

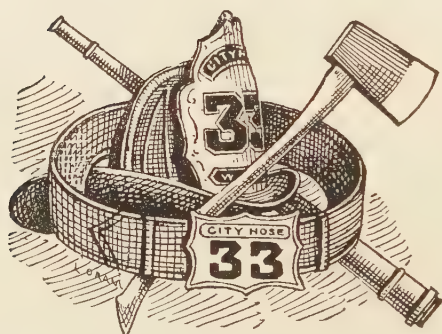
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stream thrown by the steamer. Old Hay-Wagon had won the contest, and the volunteer firemen were jubilant. But to observant city officials the most impressive feature of the trials was the fact that the men who had labored at the brakes of Old Hay-Wagon were exhausted and unable to compete further, while the power that operated the Cincinnati monster was as fresh and as strong as ever. Two steamers were ordered during the following year, at a cost of seventeen thousand dollars for the pair, and were finally delivered late in 1858. Their first practical test occurred on January 17, 1859, at a fire in Duane Street. Chief Engineer Harry Howard reported to the Common Council that he was "free to say that the expectations hoped from their introduction were not in any way realized." He declared that the very vigor of their operation was an important point against them, for "if permitted to discharge water at every fire, they would entail more damage by that element than the one it is sought to subdue." He questioned the wisdom of introducing them, and predicted that they could never become more than "an adjunct" to the hand engines. Nevertheless, the city continued to purchase steamers, and put them into active service, and they gradually gained in favor as the firemen began to realize that it was much less irksome to stand around an engine and smoke a pipe than to man the brakes. Twenty-seven such machines were in use by the end of 1864, and within another year the hand engine had been declared obsolete and banished forever from the department.

The volunteer firemen themselves were not long in following their beloved engines into oblivion. For several years prior to the Civil War there had been considerable agitation for a paid department which would devote its entire energies and attention to fire fighting, but the political influence of the volunteers prevented anything being accomplished until March 30, 1865, when the State Legislature

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passed a law abolishing the volunteer department and establishing an organization of paid firemen. Some of the old companies threatened to make trouble, and a few covered their engines and hose carts with crape, but the majority of the firemen recognized the action of the Legislature as a necessary and inevitable part of the growth and development of the metropolis. The last fire alarm answered by the volunteers was on August 31, 1865. It called them to extinguish a trifling fire in a stable in Mulberry Street, near Canal Street.



NOTES

CHAPTER I

1. Called by the Dutch the Great Salt and Mauritius Rivers.

2. Captain Block christened the strait Hellegat, meaning hell-hole, which the English corrupted into Hell Gate.

3. The Connecticut River.

4. In New York Harbor, off the Battery. Now a military reservation. The Indians called it Pagganck, or Nut Island, which the Dutch lengthened to Noten, or Nutten. The English changed the name to Governor's Island. After Governor Van Twiller bought the island from the Indians in June, 1634, it was always a perquisite of the governor of the colony. In Van Twiller's time it was much larger than now, and was so close to Red Hook, on the Brooklyn shore, that cattle waded across the channel at low tide.

5. The pond was a favorite fishing place of the Indians, who littered its shores with clam and mussel shells. The Dutch called it Kalchhook, or Shellpoint. Later this was shortened to Kalch, and eventually it became known as Collect. It was there that John Fitch sailed the first successful steamboat. Most of the site is now occupied by the Tombs and the Criminal Courts Building.

6. Adrian Van der Donck. The name of his baronial estate, Colon Donck, was later corrupted into Yonkers.

7. Dutch miles, equal to about 120 English miles.
 8. Now Cohoes, three miles from the mouth of the Mohawk River, north of Albany.

9. Corrupted by the English into Turtle Bay.

10. Another rider of the wooden horse, on May 27, 1642, was Philip Geraerdy, also a soldier. After his discharge from military service Geraerdy opened a tavern at the corner of the present Stone and Whitehall Streets, which he called The Sign of the Wooden Horse.

11. A French missionary who came to America in 1639 and went among the Indians of the Tobacco Nation. The Mohawks captured and tortured him in 1641 and kept him prisoner for two years, when he escaped and visited New York. He was killed by the savages in 1646, near Auriesville, N. Y.

12. Sergeant Cock's tavern was on the site now occupied by No. 1 Broadway. He has the distinction of having started the first breach of promise action in New York. In 1653 he sued Annetje Cornellisen Van Vorst, and the Court of Burgomasters and Schepens held that her promise to marry him was a binding contract. However, though the records fail to show why, she did not become his bride. Instead, she married a tobacco planter, Claes Jansen Van Purmerendt.

13. The city then contained one hundred and twenty houses and had about one thousand inhabitants, as determined by a rough census undertaken by order of Stuyvesant. The northern limit was Wall Street, where a line of palisades stretched across the Island from about Trinity Church to the East River, as a protection against the marauding bands of Indians who occasionally swooped down from the north. A few gates were cut in the stockade, from which lanes and rough roads led to the country estates, or bouweries, of the rich citizens. Between them and a few small settlements on the Harlem River, at the northern end of the Island,

stretched a wilderness which, though owned by the Dutch, was occupied only by the Indians.

14. Most historians say that this street was named for the great hall of Stuyvesant's house, which was painted white. It is more likely, however, that the English so designated it after the famous Whitehall Palace in London, where Henry VIII, Oliver Cromwell, and Charles II died, and before which Charles I was executed. The Palace became the property of the crown in 1530, after Wolsey's disgrace. It was burned in 1697.

15. Indian wampum, or money, also used by the Dutch. It consisted of cylindrical beads made of the white lining of the conch shell and the purple lining of the mussel shell. The latter were more valuable. Counterfeiters sometimes made the beads of stone, bone, glass, horn and even wood.

16. Fifty were placed in the Stadt Huys, or State House, the seat of the municipal government, and an equal number in Daniel Litschoe's tavern at the northern end of the city. The others were deposited in the homes of Abraham Verplanck, in Pearl Street near Fulton; Joannes Pietersen Vanbruggh, in Hanover Square; Burgomaster Paulus Leendenen Vandiegrist, in Broadway, opposite Exchange Place; Pieter Wolferson Van Couwenhoven, at Pearl and Whitehall Streets; Jan Jansen, jr., in Broadway; Hendrick Hendricksen Kip, sr., in Bridge Street between Stone and Whitehall; and Jacobus Backer, in Broad Street between Stone and William.

17. These original New York coppers were Ludowyck Pos, captain; Pieter Jansen, Hendrick Van Bommel, Jan Cornelisen Van Vleusburgh, Jan Pietersen, Gerrit Pietersen, Jan Jansen Van Laangstraat, Hendrick Ruyter, Jacques Pryn, and Thomas Verdon.

CHAPTER II

1. Greyaal's appliance was a barrel containing water and, at one end, a small metal case filled with powder, which ignited when subjected to great heat. The barrel was rolled or carried into a burning building and was supposed to burst and throw water in all directions. But a hole was so often burned in the barrel before the powder became hot enough to explode that the idea was soon abandoned as worthless.

2. Because of this feature the nozzle of a line of hose was known as the "pipe" for many years after the introduction of appliances now in use.

3. The prices paid for Newsham's engines are unknown, but in London a rival manufacturer, Fowke, sold somewhat similar machines at from fourteen to sixty pounds, depending upon supplementary equipment.

4. He was also the father of General Lamb, one of the founders of the Sons of Liberty at the beginning of the Revolution.

5. The preamble to the statute praised the citizens of New York in these well-chosen words: "Whereas, the inhabitants of the city of New York, of all degrees, have very justly acquired the reputation of being singularly and remarkably famous for their diligence and serviceableness in cases of fires," etc.

6. Besides Turck, these men, New York's first real firemen, were John Tiebout, blockmaker; Hercules Wendover, blacksmith; Jacobus Delamontagne, blockmaker; Thomas Brown, cutler; Abraham Van Gelder, gunsmith; Jacobus Stoughtenburg, gunsmith; William Roome, jr., carpenter; Walter Hyer, sr., bricklayer; Johannes Alstein, blacksmith; Everett Pells, jr., ropemaker; Peter Lott, carman; Peter Brower, bricklayer; Albertus Tiebout, car-

penter; John Vredenberg, carpenter; John Dunscombe, cooper; Johannes Roome, carpenter; Peter Marschalck, baker; Petrus Kip, baker; Andrew Myer, jr., cordwainer; Robert Richardson, cooper; Rymer Broze, blacksmith; Bar-net Bush, cooper; David Van Gelder, blacksmith; Johannes Van Duersen, cordwainer; Martinius Bogert, carman; Johannes Vredenberg, cordwainer; Johannes Van Sys, carpenter; Adolph Braise, cordwainer; and John Man, cooper.

7. A famous Swedish botanist who was sent by the Swedish government to investigate the botany and natural history of North America. The evergreen plant kalmia was named in his honor.

8. One of the early American engines formed the mechanism of the first fireboat ever used in New York. In 1800 the city ordered the construction of a flat-bottomed boat shaped like a scow, with a sharp bow and square stern. On board were installed the works of an ordinary hand-engine, and the motive power was provided by twelve men who plied long man-of-war's sweeps. The boat was stationed at the foot of Roosevelt Street, in the East River, and was supposed to scurry up and down the rivers and answer all alarms at the docks. It was very unwieldy and difficult to handle, and several times narrowly escaped being blown out to sea while trying to round the Battery. It was abandoned after ten years or so, and the floating engine did not again appear in New York for almost half a century.

CHAPTER III

1. The Dutch built dikes along the Broad Street water-course, as in the villages of the Fatherland.

2. A merchant who, with his wife, also remained and cared for the sick. He was a nailmaker in his youth, and became so expert that in one day, from 6 A.M. to 9 P.M., he fashioned 3,221 hand-wrought nails. He wrote several volumes of reminiscences.

3. This is one of many stories of the origin of The Old Oaken Bucket, and is given for what it is worth. It is taken from Costello's history of the fire department.

4. In later years the site of a boarding house where Robert Louis Stevenson stopped on his first visit to New York.

5. The Lieutenant Governor's wife was known as "Lady Bountiful" because of her benefactions to the poor. When she died in 1740 the Common Council appropriated sufficient money to give a loaf of bread "to every poor person who would receive it."

6. The site of this famous New Jersey town was originally occupied by a tribe of Indians called the Achkin-keshacky, which the settlers corrupted into Hackensack.

7. Many of the schemes were preposterous, but none was quite so absurd as the proposal made to the Common Council about 1842 by Chief Engineer Alfred Carson. He suggested that an enormous iron tank be constructed on the roof of City Hall, large enough to hold water sufficient to quench all fires that might occur in the lower part of the city. The idea is said to have originated with Carson's precocious son.

8. Colles was the first man to bring before the American people the advantages of a system of water communi-

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cation uniting the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. He was also the first to suggest, in 1812, telegraphic intercourse along the American coast from New Orleans to Passamaquoddy. For many years he operated a semaphoric telegraph between New York and Sandy Hook.

CHAPTER IV

1. A kind of half-pike formerly carried by subalterns of British infantry, and all commissioned officers of the early American militia.

2. According to a letter from George W. Corner, jr., assistant treasurer of the Baltimore Equitable Society, this engine is still in existence, and is preserved by the Board of Fire Commissioners of Baltimore in the Maryland Building in Druid Hill Park. Mr. Corner says that the Washington engine was sold by Friendship Company in 1849 to an Alexandrian junk dealer, who later sold it to a junk dealer of Frederick, Md. The latter disposed of it to the Veteran Firemen's Association of Baltimore, which turned it over to the city in 1915. Another engine, preserved in the old Friendship house in Alexandria, is also claimed to be the one bought by Washington, but according to Mr. Corner it is of a type not built until the 1840's.

3. The Bull's Head was the favorite tavern of the farmers and the drovers who brought in cattle for the market. A few years after the Revolution it became the property of Henry Ashdor, a butcher and the brother of John Jacob Astor, who changed the family name. There was much complaint by other butchers about Ashdor's custom of riding out on the Post Road and purchasing stock before the drovers reached the city. He then compelled the butchers to buy from him at a profit.

4. A list of "foremen and common men" of the department was attached to the letter. It showed a total membership of 253. Many of the firemen listed, however, were Tories, and had fled when the British evacuated New York.

5. The name of this organization was probably suggested by that of America's first fire insurance company, the

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Philadelphia Contributionship, popularly known as "The Hand-in-Hand." It was formed in 1752.

6. From the "Rules and Orders" of the Heart-in-Hand Fire Company.

7. He was hanged next morning, after a trial in the greenhouse of the Beekman Mansion, on a hill which overlooked the East River near Fifty-first Street.

8. Later edited by Zachariah Lewis, who changed the name to the *New York Commercial Advertiser*.

9. So called by the Dutch, who also knew it as Shawbackiana and Tapokanico. It was probably the largest Indian town on Manhattan Island.

CHAPTER V

1. A Liberty Pole, 137 feet high, erected in 1834 by Tom Riley at the southwest corner of Franklin Street and West Broadway. It was struck by lightning the following year, but another was immediately erected by the Democratic politicians, and remained standing until 1858.

CHAPTER VI

1. The Crystal Palace, an immense structure which contained 1,250 tons of iron and 39,999 square feet of glass, fronted on Sixth Avenue. It extended from Fortieth to Forty-second Street and, in the rear, to the present site of the Public Library, then occupied by the Croton Reservoir. The Palace was opened on July 14, 1853, as an exhibition hall, and at the time of the fire about 4,000 separate exhibits were on display, including three fire engines and two hose carts. Nothing was saved, and two thousand persons who had assembled in the main auditorium for a concert narrowly escaped. The loss was estimated at two million dollars.

2. New York policemen were so called until about 1845, when they appeared on the streets wearing star-shaped badges made of copper. For a while thereafter they were known as the Star Police, then as coppers, and eventually as cops.

3. Louisiana gumbo more nearly resembles the old-time chowder than anything else that graces the modern table.

4. The elder Booth, then at the height of his fame and prosperity, also appeared in Kean's support, but for some unknown reason played the part of Second Actor, the most insignificant character in the play.

5. Among the members of No. 18 were Samuel Leggett, who introduced gas into the city, and Cornelius W. Lawrence, the first Mayor of New York elected by popular vote.

CHAPTER VII

1. The New York Weather Bureau has no record that the Sound, or the Hudson River near New York, has ever frozen over. According to these records the East River has not been frozen since February 10, 1875, when the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and his wife walked from Brooklyn to Manhattan, "to show that the wicked were not the only ones who could stand in slippery places." In 1867 the East River was also frozen, and the Fulton baseball team of Brooklyn attempted to play a game on the ice, but it was called after a few innings because of moving grounds.

2. According to most historical and contemporary accounts. The records of the U. S. Army Signal Corps, however, give the temperature as four degrees above zero. This reading was taken at Fort Columbus, on Governor's Island. The coldest day ever recorded by the Weather Bureau was December 30, 1917, when the temperature was thirteen degrees below zero.

3. The origin of the fire was never discovered, but it was believed to have been caused by the explosion of a gas pipe.

4. The predecessor of the modern Stock Exchange. It was begun in 1825 and occupied in July, 1827. The first stock broker in New York was Archibald Blair, who opened an office at No. 16 Little Queen Street in 1786. Others followed, and for several years they met and transacted business under a large buttonwood tree on the north side of Wall Street, about where No. 68 now stands. In 1792 a "Stock Exchange Office" was opened in the Tontine Coffee House, at Wall and Water Streets. Later the brokers moved to the Merchants' Exchange.

5. A very famous tavern, and the first New York Stock

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Exchange. The building was erected in 1792 by the Tontine Association, and John Hyde was the first landlord of the Coffee House. It was kept at the time of the fire by Edward Bardine, who is said to have burned the first anthracite coal ever used in New York.

6. The fact that merchants and others were unable to obtain money with which to rebuild was one of the important contributing causes of the panic of 1837. The fire, and the unemployment that followed it, were also direct causes of the Four Riots of 1837, when mobs attacked wholesale grocery houses that were suspected of hoarding provisions, and destroyed some six hundred barrels of flour and more than a thousand bushels of wheat. The day after the rioting the price of flour was increased from fifty cents to one dollar a barrel.

CHAPTER VIII

1. Apparently a parody on a famous, and very old, boarding house song:

*There is a boarding house
Right across the way;
Where they have ham and eggs
Three times a day.
Oh, how the boarders yell
When they hear the dinner bell;
Oh, how the eggs do smell,
Three times a day.*

2. The cart operated by this patriotic company was also noted because, by means of an ingenious set of cog-wheels, it could turn completely around in its own length. No other vehicle in the department could perform the feat.

3. The Assistant Foreman of this company, Daniel Slote, later became widely known as the Dan of Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad."

4. Tweed was a fireman for many years. Some accounts say that he worked at an engine during the Great Fire of 1835, but since he was only about eleven years old at the time, the story is probably apocryphal. A few years later, however, he joined Hose Company No. 25, and was subsequently a member of Hose Company No. 36, Engine Companies Nos. 21 and 12, and of Big Six. He was Foreman of Big Six from 1852 to 1854. He was a brawler and a trouble-maker, and once while Foreman was suspended for three months by the Chief Engineer for leading Big Six in an attack upon Hose Company No. 31.

5. Among other famous vessels Webb built, in 1847, the *United States*, which was the first steamship to pass through the Golden Gate. Another noted member of Old

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Turk, though not a singer, was James R. Steers, also a ship-builder. With his brother, George Steers, he built the celebrated yacht *America*, which entered the regatta of the London Yacht Club on August 21, 1851, but was ruled out on a technicality. When the official entries started from Ryde, however, the *America* put out from Cowes, and though she sailed nine miles farther than the others, easily beat them to the finish line. Queen Victoria awarded the *America* an exact duplicate of the cup given to the winner of the regatta, and it has become the most sought after trophy in international yachting. Sir Thomas Lipton and other British sportsmen have vainly attempted to capture it.

CHAPTER IX

1. A former runner of this company, John C. Denham, performed several remarkable feats at the burning of Barnum's Museum in the Chinese Assembly Rooms, in Broadway, in March, 1868. He killed a tiger with an axe when the beast rushed from the Museum into the street, and then carried out the fat lady, who weighed more than four hundred pounds, and the wooly-headed woman.

2. Broderick's senatorial colleague from California was William M. Gwin, who was created Duke of Sonora by Maximilian during the Austrian Archduke's brief reign as Emperor of Mexico. It has been said that Broderick's political enemies, finding his anti-slavery views obnoxious, held a caucus to determine who should kill him in a duel. The choice fell upon Judge Terry, an experienced duellist and a crack shot with a pistol.

3. He referred to a speaking acquaintance with Lindley Murray, the famous grammarian. Murray published his "English Grammar" in 1795, and its success was extraordinary. It was introduced into all the British and American public schools, and made his name a household word wherever English was spoken. He was often referred to as the maker or founder of the English language.

4. Humphreys was a type-setter by trade, but he seldom worked at it.

5. The first steam fire engine used anywhere was constructed in England in 1829 by Messrs. Braithwaite and Ericsson. Hodge's was the first built in the United States, although the honor has also been claimed for Captain John Ericsson. Hodge, however, showed that Ericsson had made a design for an engine, but that it was never manufactured. Ericsson's design received the medal offered by the Mechanics' Institute of New York in 1840.

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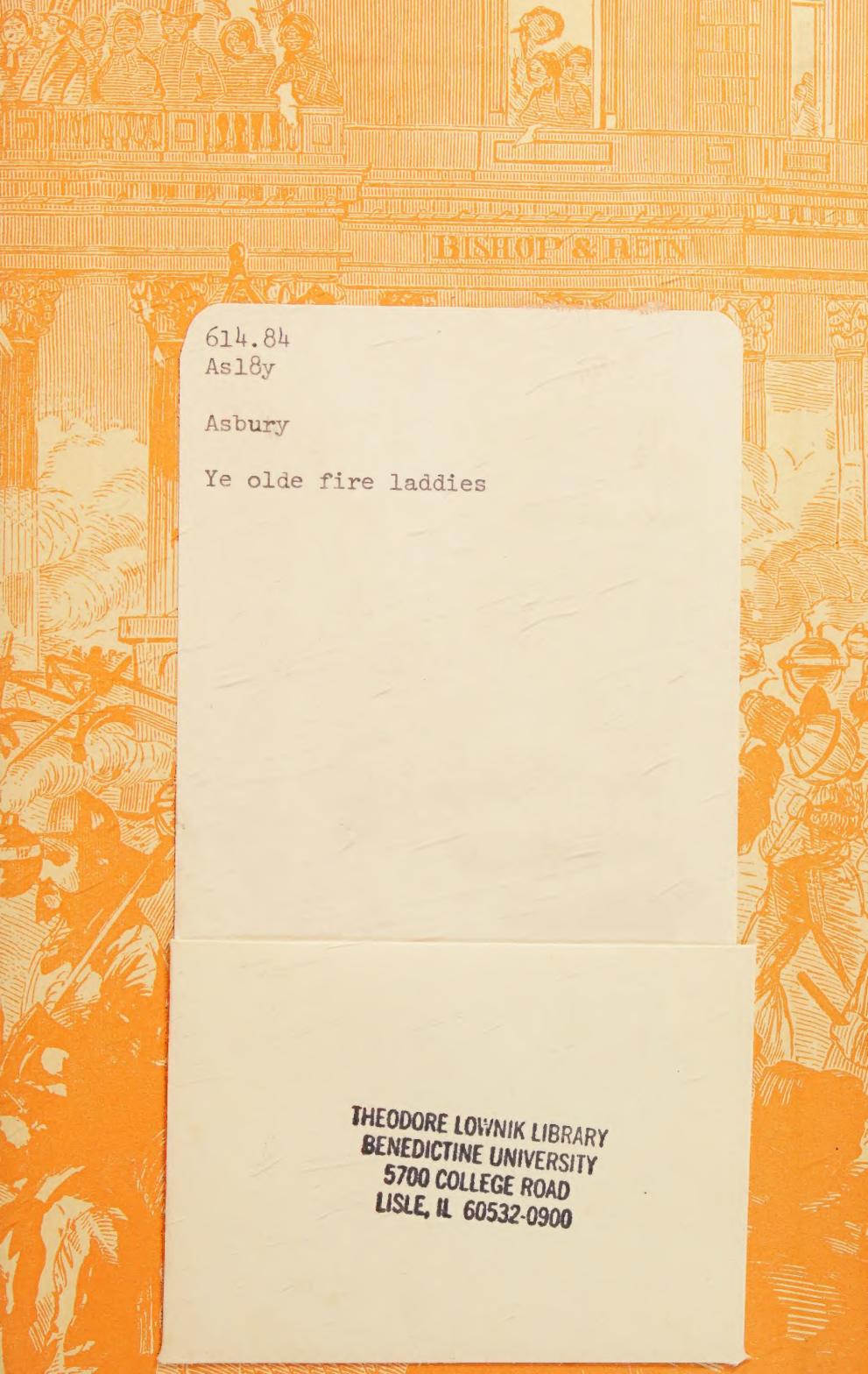
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